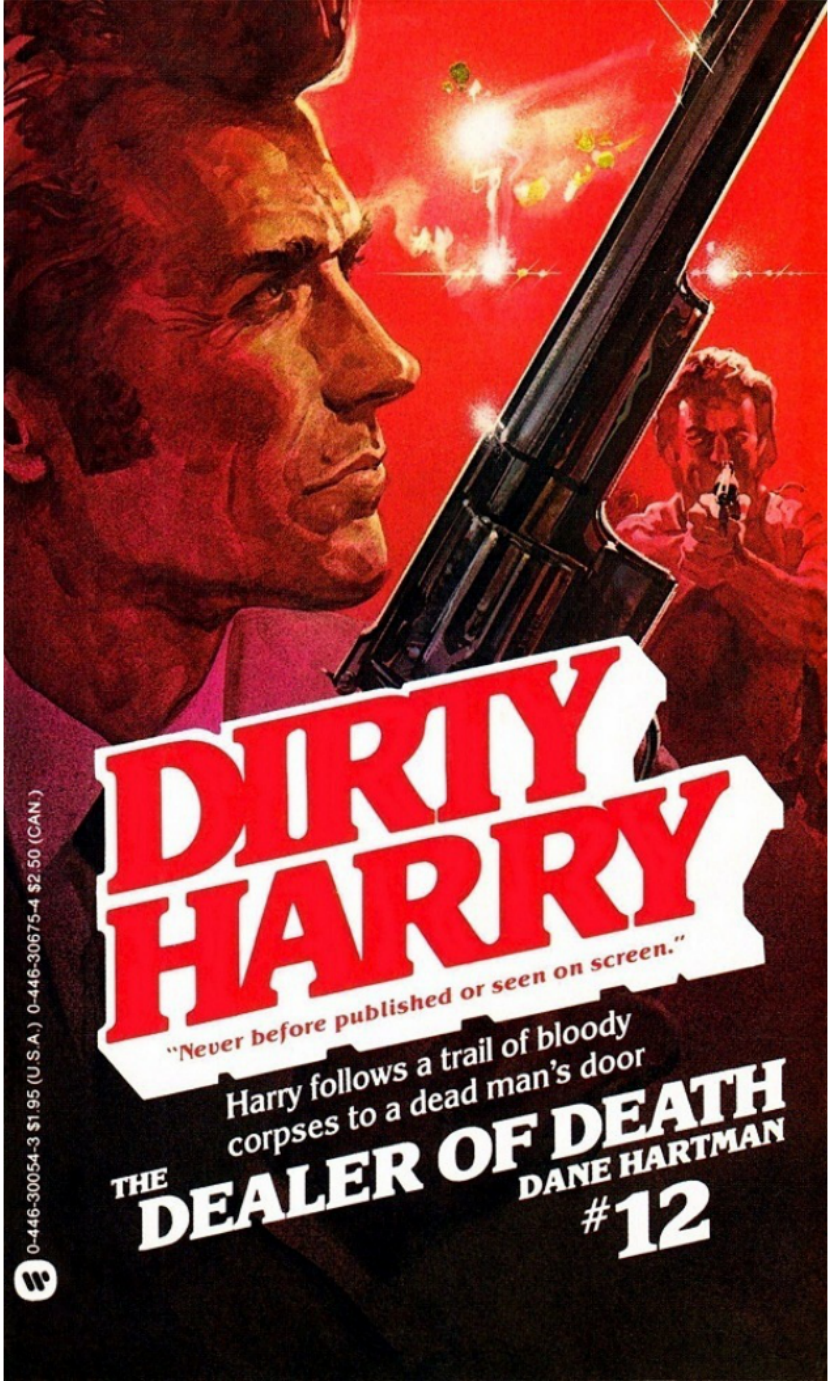
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Harry threw himself down, firing two shots, both of which caught the man at the bottom of the stairs in his gut. His face bore a look of unmistakable surprise and sudden shock. Somehow, even as he was thrown back against the further wall, he managed to maintain hold of the M10 which he discharged at a furious rate.

But his aim was way off, which was understandable as his main concern at the moment was getting the business of dying done, and rather than hitting Harry, he cut his friend down, savaging him with a hail of bullets that blew out his vitals, strewing them all over the stairway.

The blood and viscera made the going slippery, but Harry proceeded with caution. There was still a third man out there . . .

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DIRTY HARRY #12

The Dealer of Death

Dane Hartman

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DIRTY HARRY #12

THE DEALER OF DEATH

Opening Round

"Hey, friend, can I give you a lift?"

The vagrant raised his sorrowful eyes toward the man in the Camaro, but because he could not believe these words were addressed to him, he did not stop.

The man in the Camaro trailed him though, and again he called out to him in a voice that was certainly genial enough. "Well, if I can't give you a lift maybe I could treat you to a drink?"

This time the vagrant did pause. He was a man in his mid-forties. The hardness of his life and the long days and nights of unending intoxication had taken their toll on him, and he appeared older than his years. His body still retained its strength, however, almost in defiance of the abuse he had inflicted on it for so long.

"A drink you say?" He was naturally suspicious. Living on the streets had taught him caution.

"That's right." He displayed a full bottle of bourbon for the vagrant to see.

It looked mighty inviting, but having been the victim of so much bad luck in his time, he failed to comprehend that his luck should suddenly have changed.

"Why me?"

"Why you?" The man laughed. "Because I like you." He laughed again as if to some private little joke. "No, the real reason is that I've just had a very good day and I feel like sharing it with somebody." Anticipating the question that was sure to follow, he went on, "And in any case, you remind me of someone I know, someone who's very close to me. Let's just say, it's my way of showing my appreciation."

"Philanthropist, are you?" the vagrant said, warily approaching the car.

The owner of the car was surprised by the use of the word. Maybe the man was educated? In the tatters he wore, with the alcohol on his breath, there was no way of telling.

"Something like that."

What he did not say, was that the man the vagrant reminded him of was himself. That was about as close a relationship as one can get.

At first, they just sat in the car sharing the liter of Jack Daniels,

passing it back and forth. It was all the man behind the wheel could do to keep from recoiling at the stench of his guest. But he smiled, he joked. He did his best to reassure the vagrant he had nothing to be afraid of.

The vagrant at first drank greedily from the bottle, but little by little, he began to relax. “This is too good to be true,” he muttered. “Let me introduce myself.” And he did. But his host was barely listening, though he maintained a fixed smile on his face. “And what be your name?”

He should lie, but he thought: Hell, it won’t make any difference in a little while. And besides, it was something of a risk, letting the man know his name, and it was his nature always to take the risk. It had gotten him in a great deal of trouble, to be sure, but it made him feel alive. Nothing was more important, he believed, than to feel one was alive.

“James Gallant,” he replied slowly. “James William Gallant.”

The vagrant didn’t recognize the name and took the hand in his and gave it a vigorous shake. “Pleased to meet you. And what is it you are celebrating?”

Deciding that he had nothing to lose by divulging the truth, Gallant said that morning he had left prison after doing time for six and a half years.

Being on the fringe of society himself, with his share of nights spent behind bars for creating a public nuisance, the vagrant was not dismayed by this information. On the contrary, he congratulated him, but he was interested to learn what James William Gallant’s crime had been.

“Murder.”

“Ah, murder.” This put a whole new perspective on things. “Who did you kill?”

“A cop.”

“A cop.” The vagrant shook his head in bewilderment. “And they let you go after only six and a half years? I thought they put cop-killers away for life. No offense intended.” He was drinking from the bottle with more enthusiasm now.

“And none taken, friend,” said James William Gallant. “Well, let’s just say I let myself out.”

“Oh.” The vagrant wasn’t quite sure how to react to this. He was pretty far gone with all that he’d been consuming throughout the day, and it was with some astonishment that he now realized how dark it was, but he wasn’t so smashed that he was immune from the fear that

was gradually mounting inside of him. It wasn't much initially, the fear, just a small round ball at the pit of his stomach, but it was beginning to expand, and he resolved to get out of the car as soon as he could, no matter how much bourbon was left in the damn bottle.

The thing of it was, this Gallant fellow looked so reasonable, and rather handsome, almost the way he would look, if he got himself cleaned up. "You must be pretty clever to escape like that," he noted.

"Oh, I am, I am very clever," said Mr. Gallant.

"And to go and get yourself a nice new car too. People never in jail a day in their lives, they never would be able to get a car nice as this one."

"That's right, friend, that's how it is."

There was still a goodly portion of bourbon left in the bottle; they'd been drinking it and drinking it, and yet they didn't seem to be getting close to the bottom.

Finally, the vagrant said he had to be going.

"So soon?"

The block, this close to the Embarcadero, was nearly empty, and the evening darkness was compounded by a mid-spring fog rolling in from the Pacific. Even if there was somebody closeby one wouldn't have been able to see him.

"It's getting late . . ."

"Late? You run a tight schedule, is that it?"

There was laughter in his voice, but the laughter was no longer buoyant, a little savage. The vagrant placed a chapped hand on the door. He did not know whether he could stand, let alone run if running proved necessary. But certainly the fog would shroud him. How easy it would be to get lost in the fog. By morning, he knew he would scarcely remember this incident.

"Very tight schedule," mumbled the vagrant.

"Ok, then, if you have to go you have to go. You can take the bottle with you. It's all right with me."

The vagrant nodded and smiled ludicrously and struggled with the door until he managed to get it open. The man who called himself James William Gallant had turned into a blur. He had two heads, not just one. He had two hands on the wheel, and two raised in the air. In these two raised hands were two instruments that very much resembled knitting needles. They were, in any case, silver and long. Very long.

The vagrant leaned to the left, intending to leap out of the car, but

his vision was so out of focus, he failed to lean in the appropriate direction. Not that it would have mattered had he been able to see with absolute clarity, for the alcohol had made his movements clumsy and slow. The only beneficial aspect of the alcohol was that it took the edge off the pain as the needle penetrated the back of his neck. There was a sharp sting, a flash of light, a rush of blood to the throat, then a warm darkness.

The wound, fatal as it was, was not very large, nor was there much blood. This was why James Gallant had chosen the instrument he had. He maneuvered the vagrant's body back onto the seat and shut the door. The fog, he noted, was still dense. The weather could not have been more cooperative.

The stench from the vagrant was bad before, he thought, but now it was worse.

Gallant was consoled by the fact that it would all be over soon. Breathing through his mouth, he drew the lifeless man up close to him. He changed clothes with him although this meant that he smelled every bit as badly as his victim. When this was done, he started the ignition and drove the car he'd stolen that morning north in the direction of Fisherman's Wharf. His purpose was to find a patrol car and crash into it.

Under ordinary circumstances—though it was questionable whether James William Gallant had ever in his life encountered such a thing as ordinary circumstances—smashing into a patrol car was not something he would have elected to do. Better just to drive around San Francisco until he was cited for going through a stop sign or a speeding violation, anything that would precipitate a chase. But with the fog mounting, it was unlikely he could draw attention to himself. That was all right. The fog would help him in any case.

In the North Beach area, where the lights of Broadway and Columbus were sufficiently garish to dispel the encroaching mist, Gallant spied a black and white. He looked to his right to make certain that the vagrant's body was well below windshield level; then he began to weave through traffic, provoking a furious outburst of blaring horns. Eliciting just the reaction he had hoped for.

The patrolmen couldn't help notice him. Gallant assumed that while they gave chase, they would be checking out his license plate number. Naturally they would learn that the car belonged to one of Soledad Prison's wardens and that it had been stolen by an escaped prisoner named James W. Gallant. He'd be grievously disappointed if they proved inefficient.

While it had been several years since he'd last been behind the

wheel of a car, he had lost none of his driving skill. It was true what they said, it came right back to one.

Directing his car toward the shoreline, he delighted in the plaintive whine behind him. He was a little drunk himself, and he scarcely paid any attention as to where he was going. It was enough that he was headed in the general direction of Golden Gate Park and the Pacific Ocean. He wanted to make a spectacular exit from the world.

From the sound of it, other patrol cars had joined the chase. He kept glancing up at the rear view mirror so he neglected to see what was happening on the road in front of him. But out of the corner of his eye he saw that someone—a man or a woman he couldn't tell—was in his path, making an effort to get out of his way. But not fast enough. There was a solid thud followed by a strangled cry. To Gallant's vast surprise, the person he'd hit—an elderly woman he saw now—had been knocked up onto the hood and there for an instant she remained: a vision of blood in a hairnet and furcoat. If there was any life left in her, it was surely crushed by the tires as they ran over her.

All Gallant could think about was getting this whole business over with. He didn't know how much longer he would be able to tolerate the smell of death and decay surrounding him on all sides. The windows were wide open, but even the San Francisco night air seemed stale.

Somehow he had driven up onto a sidewalk. Ashcans clattered and toppled as the car barreled ahead. The fog had thickened along the shore. Fisherman's Wharf, if that was what it was, looked like something one might see in a dream: ghostly shadows with strange bright lights emerging every now and again from the murk.

His left fender made a horrible wrenching noise as it came apart. He saw he'd sideswiped a red Buick, though he hadn't the faintest notion how he'd done that. He didn't remember the Buick being there. Well, he guessed he was drunker than he'd thought. He had rarely got hold of booze in prison, so his system was more susceptible to it than it had been in the old days.

Where the hell was he? No landmark presented itself. Up ahead, there was a large clump of trees. Golden Gate Park? No idea. The sirens were beginning to annoy him. Have to put an end to this, he decided.

A bough sheared off and came to rest on top of his hood, the leaves turned bright crimson in the blood of the lady he'd killed some miles back.

He heard the roar of the ocean pounding against the rocks before he glimpsed it. He had to shake himself in order to act. I should never

have gotten this drunk, he muttered. I should've left the drinking to this asshole. The dead vagrant seemed to watch him with open glassy eyes.

The patrol cars were gaining on him, but they were still some distance back. He could resort to short cuts, run over old women and tear through wooded terrain. It wouldn't do to smash up city property as whimsically as he had his stolen vehicle.

He opened the door on his side, careful to keep one hand on the wheel. The ocean must be just below him. The stretch of land barely visible in front of him came to a point, then stopped. Beyond that, Gallant figured, there'd be a drop of several hundred feet.

A massive tree was in the way. He hadn't noticed it and was astonished when it snapped the open door off. The car was hurtling toward the abyss at eighty miles an hour. Even when he thought to remove his foot from the gas, it failed to slow the car significantly. Momentum and gravity were carrying it forward.

Better get the hell out of here, he decided, reaching over to move the dead man into position. It had to be done in one deft, and miraculously quick motion.

Everything was happening much faster than he'd anticipated. A wire mesh fence came into view at the land's end, but there was no question it would do nothing to forestall the Camaro's progress. He hesitated for a moment, gazing wide-eyed at the ground flashing by, then leapt . . .

God, it hurt. His legs in particular. He only hoped nothing was broken. Propping himself up on his hands, he managed to get a glimpse of the speeding car as it broke through the mesh and soared for an instant into the air before disappearing. It was a wonderful sight.

A moment or two later, there was a resounding crash which echoed from rock to rock as the battered machine went clattering down the slope. Even before it got to the bottom, the engine exploded, igniting the darkness with a bright orange ball of flame.

Gallant succeeded in getting to his feet. He could barely walk, but he felt certain nothing was broken. In time, the torn muscles would mend. Hiding himself in the underbrush, he watched as first one, then a second patrol car drew to a halt just before the damaged fence. More sirens could be heard in the background.

The four officers got out of their black and whites and ambled over to the edge and looked down. The Camaro was by now a blackened hulk, silhouetted by the bright golden fire.

"Nobody could live through that," one officer remarked.

“Well, that should put an end to the murderous son of a bitch,” another said with evident satisfaction.

“What do you think makes somebody like that tick?” the first asked.

No one seemed to have an answer to the question. Even the man hiding in the bushes didn’t know. But the diagnosis of his psychological state was something he left to others. He had achieved two objectives he’d set for the day: he’d escaped from jail in the morning and managed to convince the police he had killed himself in the evening. Now he intended to get on with his third objective: killing the man who’d put him in jail in the first place—Harry Callahan.

CHAPTER

One

The front page was what Sheila Richmond generally got to last. She started in back with the features, barely paid attention to the economic news—though it was something she thought she should know—ignored the sports section completely, and only then did she peruse the headlines. While she seldom found the paper enlightening, and never encouraging, she enjoyed the leisure that went with reading it. Bathed in the sunlight poring through her kitchen window, it was the one hour she had to herself, squeezed in between getting her six-year-old off to school and starting out to work herself.

Unless it was a major fire on Polk Street, just a block away from where she lived, or a hike in her utility bills, the news stories rarely had a personal impact.

This morning, however, was an exception.

This morning she could feel her heart hammering mercilessly in her chest; her temples throbbed, and she felt the blood drain from her face. This morning, a man's name was on the front page which she had hoped never to hear of ever again.

The man's name was James William Gallant.

His photograph was there under the headline: ESCAPED CON KILLS SELF AFTER WILD SPREE. The photograph was six years old, taken when he was booked and indicted for the murder of a police officer on the East Basin of Pier 45. The police officer was no longer on duty, he wasn't wearing a uniform, but he had his gun with him. He'd never gotten to use the gun though; the murderer was just a fraction of a second too fast for him. Five shots had been fired. One, she would have thought, would have been sufficient. But he had to pump five shots into him even as he lay there, twitching convulsively in response. She remembered the scene vividly, although she hadn't been there. It had been described so many times, she had relived it in her mind so many times, it was as though she'd been an eyewitness. That man had been her husband, Sam Richmond. He was twenty-eight years old when he died. Two years a husband, two months a father, and dead.

After Gallant's conviction, after he'd been locked up for two concurrent sentences of ninety-nine years, Sheila had resolved to

begin her life anew. Her therapist had counseled her to vanquish her husband's murderer from her mind, to put aside all thoughts of revenge—which wasn't hers to exact in any case—and rejoin the human race. It had taken many months to accomplish this mental feat, but she had gotten so that she barely thought of Gallant. All he did was taint Sam's memory.

She could barely bring herself to regard the photograph of the monster. His face was less an oval than a square, emphasized by the taut lines of his jaw: his eyes were small, inquisitive, and vacant—at least in this picture—and his hair was cut severely short even before the prison barbers could get to it. But what was most disconcerting was the way his lips had formed. It wasn't exactly a smile, but there was a malevolent twist to them that suggested a peculiar smugness. It was as though he were trying to give the impression that neither the threat of a lifelong incarceration nor the electric chair—should that penalty ever be enforced in the State of California—distressed him. Every account of the court proceedings Sheila had read, confirmed that impression. He was a man for whom two of the most human attributes had somehow never been allowed to develop: conscience and fear.

There was another photograph that all but dominated the front page. It depicted the burning Camaro in which Gallant met his bourbon-soaked death.

Sheila knew his demise should make her happy, that she should be relieved. But she was neither happy nor relieved. For one thing, no one's death pleased her, not even that of her husband's killer. But there was something else. She had a sense that the danger Gallant posed—to her, to society—was not over. There was no rationale for this feeling. It was instinctive, but it was very real all the same.

It was strange how life had worked. Though her friends were discreet enough not to mention it, she was well aware that they said she had a "thing" for cops. Whether they meant passion or an occasional fancy or the sort of interest a hobbiest might take in his model trains, she was never quite sure. She was sure that were it not for this "thing" she would never have accepted an invitation to dinner from a traffic patrolman right after he stopped her for going through a red light.

She was a striking woman with an air of refinement. She came from a wealthy background, wealthy enough so she could have had a chauffeur drive through the red light in her stead, if she'd wanted. Her father would never understand why his daughter wasn't married to a man of suitable wealth and consummate taste. A man like himself. Nor did he understand why, following her husband's death, she declined

the money he was willing to provide her and went to work instead, turning a talent for graphics into a career that supported her—though not in a style to which her father had hoped she'd have accustomed herself. The only money she ever accepted from him was for her daughter and most of that had been put into a trust fund.

So there was no way her father could cut her off and disinherit her—as in bursts of temper he was apt to do—should she start seeing yet another cop. It wasn't that he disliked cops—he really didn't have much of an opinion one way or the other—it was only because he did not want to see his daughter's heart and his granddaughter's—broken again.

But Sheila Richmond seemed continuously to be putting her heart in the same peril she had seven years before when at two in the morning Sam Richmond had ripped up the ticket he'd been writing because she'd said yes, she'd be delighted to have dinner with him on his next day off.

The cop this time had not stopped her for a traffic violation. That was not his job. The first time she'd met him was in the courtroom where her husband's murderer was being tried. At that point in her life she was too distraught to pay much attention to anyone aside from her daughter. But she remembered him and noted his name whenever it appeared in the papers in connection with one case or the other, without quite knowing why.

They encountered each other again at a special memorial service given by the force for those men slain in action. Harry did not recollect who she was until she went over and introduced herself. She thanked him for hunting down Gallant and making the arrest.

"I should have told you this before," was what she'd said.

"It wasn't necessary then," he told her, "and it isn't now."

But she felt in some way still obligated to him. She asked him to dinner. Seven years had changed her. She no longer ran red lights and she didn't wait for a man to invite her to dinner if she was interested in him.

It was ironic that she didn't fully realize she was interested in Harry until much later. Well, she thought, that was what a "thing" for cops did to you.

It was difficult conducting a love affair on one's own. Sam's hours had been erratic, and often he wasn't around when she wanted him. But with Harry it was ridiculous. Weeks would go by. He'd call and swear to her he'd be over for dinner, only to cancel at the last minute because the investigation he was working on had taken a new twist. Or someone had been shot to death on the corner of Market and 8th.

Or had his throat slit in a tenement on Mission.

Downright frustrating was what it was. There were times Sheila was ready to swear off Harry. But it was like swearing off cigarettes for a two-pack-a-day smoker, nearly impossible.

In any case, tonight Harry had assured her would be hers. Anything she wanted: cocktails, dinner, a show—anything. He owed it to her. But would he be able to keep his promise? Well, she would just have to wait and see.

In the meantime, she had to get dressed and ready for work. The sense of foreboding she'd felt earlier had begun to vanish. It was like a brief thundershower on a summer afternoon, quickly forgotten. Gallant was dead, and that was the end of the matter. She discarded the paper and went into the bedroom just in time to answer the phone.

"Hello?"

She could hear street noises, but nothing else. 'Hello?" she said again, more insistently.

Again nothing. She angrily hung up. The foreboding returned.

Gallant watched the woman descend the stairs from the three-story building. She was prettier than he remembered. The intervening years had been kind to her. She wore her hair differently. It was tied up in back, accentuating the delicacy of her features, the blue-green eyes, the upturned nose, the curve of her lips. Her dress was long, nearly ankle length, but it was slit so that every few paces it was possible to behold a tantalizing view of her legs. There was no doubt in Gallant's mind this was Sheila Richmond, the wife of the cop he'd gunned down. The phone call would have alarmed her, coming as it did right after news of his purported demise especially if he could be sure she had heard the broadcast.

She wouldn't know what to think, and that was exactly how he wanted it. Actually he wasn't sure why he was so anxious to frighten her. Especially when his principal goal was to humiliate and then kill Harry Callahan. But for six years, ever since he'd first laid eyes on her in the courtroom, he had been unable to get her out of his head. He'd been with better looking women. Ones with more flesh to grab onto, but there was something about her that appealed to him. The more he studied her face, even from a distance, the more he found to interest him. And there was another part of it, the perverse and highly erotic thrill of seducing the wife of a man one has killed—even if that seduction must be deceptive and achieved by force.

But right now, he had to confine his pursuit to observing her from

afar. After all, he'd been out of prison for only twenty-four hours. He hadn't gotten really used to the idea yet. What's more, as far as the rest of the world was concerned, he was a dead man. That was an idea that he wasn't sure he was ever going to get used to.

No matter, he had important business to attend to before he could concentrate on either of his intended victims. He needed clothes, money, a car. Last night, after engineering his faked death, he had gone to a men's shelter not far from the bus terminal on Market Street. It was what the vagrant would have done, and God knows he looked as seedy and wasted as any vagrant. The odor of blood and loose stool that emanated from him was so powerful that the staff of the shelter had instantly stripped him down, given him a shower, and given him a new set of clothes. It was an indignity he suffered without complaint. After so much time in prison, he was accustomed to being treated as a marginal member of society.

The men's shelter was not where he planned to spend any nights in the future. No, James William Gallant deserved the best. He was prepared to do whatever he had to to get it. The people at the shelter had given him a couple of bucks before sending him on his way. But all he'd needed were just a couple of dimes. One he'd already used. Now he dropped the second into the phone.

The voice on the other end was just as gravelly and suspicious as he remembered it.

"Turner here."

"Turner, this is Gallant."

There was a long pause on the other end. It wasn't every day that one received a call from a dead man.

"Gallant's dead." Turner didn't sound adamant about the point, he was just stating what he thought was true.

"The papers said he was dead, there's a difference. You don't believe everything you read in those rags, do you?"

"That may or may not be relevant."

"Checkerboard would be relevant, wouldn't it?"

Checkerboard was a little scheme he and Turner had run down eight years back. It involved hijacking meat belonging to the Checker Produce Company which is where the code name had been derived. Not many people knew about Checkerboard.

"Maybe you are who you say you are. Maybe you would care to come around to my office and have a little talk. Just so as I could get a look at you."

"I want you to know right off, I'm going to need a few things."

“Like money?”

“That’s a good start.”

“Well, everything’s possible. Of course, you might have to do some work for us in payment—that is if you are who you claim to be.”

“I’m prepared for that. You still where you always were?”

“That’s right. Some things never change, do they?”

CHAPTER

Two

It was approaching five o'clock. That meant if some disaster didn't strike between now and six, Harry would be able to finally make Sheila's on time. Something like that hadn't happened in so many months she might consider it a miracle. Punctuality was a virtue that Harry kept trying to cultivate, but he couldn't seem to get the hang of the thing.

He should not have been thinking about the possibility of a disaster occurring. It was bad luck, and he should have known by now that disasters never scheduled themselves for his convenience.

Dispatchers seldom allowed their personal feelings to intrude on their broadcasts. They delivered the facts—at least what shreds of information they had available to them—with a monotone that gave no hint as to how perilous a situation might be. The numbered codes sometimes made them sound as if they were announcing the day's closing stock quotations; but this time it was different.

"Victor Two, Victor Two . . ."

"This is Victor Two, what is it?"

"You're never going to believe this."

"What have you got for me?"

"We've got a report somebody is hijacking the ferry to Tiburon."

"Nobody hijacks the Tiburon ferry," Harry said. "Where the hell would they go to? Alameda?"

"I know, I know it sounds crazy, but there it is. We got a call into the station at four-fifty-seven reporting a disturbance at Pier 43½. A second call was recorded at a minute before the hour saying that a man with a weapon was in the process of seizing the ferry."

"I'm on my way."

To Harry it sounded like a weirdo, one of those demented souls who in a desperate attempt to gain attention pulls a stunt that is sure to achieve front-page coverage. He just might also find a place in the back of the paper—on the obituary page.

But all Harry could think about was how he was going to disarm and apprehend this asshole, book him, and get to Sheila's before it got

so late he had to cancel another evening. She'd never forgive him, not even if it was for the sake of two or three dozen commuters and sightseers who were getting more than they bargained for when they purchased their tickets for the Red and White ferry.

Two patrol cars were already on the scene when Harry pulled up to the pier. But there was little activity on the part of the officers gathered there. They seemed to be waiting for someone with more authority before they committed themselves to a course of action.

Harry supposed that he was that authority.

"What we've got here, Inspector, is confusion," said one of the cops.

"How is that?" he said, hoping for a more enlightening explanation.

"Well, the ferry's out there, maybe twenty, thirty yards, but it's stalled. We can hear the motors running, but it's not moving. There's been a lot of screaming from the boat, but it's hard to tell what's happening." There was a man, Harry saw, at the end of the pier and he was shouting toward the boat through a bullhorn, but he'd evidently been doing this on and off for the last fifteen minutes without being rewarded with a response.

"Have you heard any gunshots?"

"Nothing. No shots. Just people screaming like I said. They're supposed to be getting a chopper into the air any time now to see if a view from overhead can provide us with more information. And the Coast Guard is sending over a launch. Should be here any minute. The problem is we don't want to panic the asshole on board. Were waiting for him to say something to us, tell us he wants to go to Cuba, or some shit."

"Cuba," said Harry. "You could do worse than Cuba."

The cop didn't seem to know what to make of this last remark.

Just then there was a burst of gunfire followed immediately by a roar of voices that reminded Harry of the reaction generated in the stands when Oakland scored a touchdown.

"I didn't like the sound of that," one cop noted glumly.

"Neither did I," Harry said. "Is there some kind of motor launch I can use?"

"There is . . ." the cop said, "but you're not going to take it out, are you? Not until we coordinate our strategy."

"The coordination will just have to wait."

Several police officers were scrambling down to the edge of the pier, brandishing their weapons. But there really wasn't anything they could do. The sight of their guns could hardly have inspired much

confidence among the beleaguered passengers on board the ferry.

Although he made no attempt to hide what he was doing, neither did Harry make himself conspicuous. He located a small motor launch tied up to the end of the pier and slipped down into it. It smelled strongly of gas, and Harry prayed that it hadn't been abandoned here because something was wrong with it. But though it sputtered when he started it up, it eventually did respond. Harry began to navigate into the bay. He kept to the minimum speed, not in excess of five knots per hour, steering the craft in a northwesterly direction, at an angle the ferry had taken just before coming to its unscheduled stop. He assumed the hijacker—and for all anyone knew there could be more than one—would be on watch for any approaching vessels. He had no intention of alerting him until the last possible moment.

In the meantime, the long-promised helicopter appeared, hovering above the ferry, dipping as low as the pilot dared take it, before breaking off its reconnaissance mission.

Hoping the presence of the chopper would be a sufficient distraction to divert attention from himself, Harry abruptly swung the launch to the left so he was now running a collision course with the ferry. He kept down although the boat was so small he was afforded little protection.

He anticipated a response from the gunman. Yet until he'd closed nearly all the remaining distance between him and the ferry, nothing happened. Harry knew there'd be a reception, and there was. It was exactly the kind he'd figured on. It certainly wasn't very hospitable.

The V-shaped window exploded with the first discharge of gunfire. Then the hull of the small craft was riddled with a sustained fusillade that must have damaged something vital inside because when Harry tried to steer nothing happened. He turned the wheel to the right, to the left, but the boat held to the course Harry had chosen for it earlier. In a few moments he would slam right into the stern of the ferry.

The only thing he could do was to cut the motor. But the momentum of the launch was so great, and the distance separating one craft from the other so small, that simply shutting down the motor was not enough to forestall the collision.

Harry thought of jumping, but didn't. He was going to end up in the water in any case, only he trusted it would be in one piece.

The impact sent the motor launch up into the air so that for an instant it resembled an odd-looking porpoise surfacing. Then, with its fiberglass hull squashed and twisted, it dropped back into the bay. The ferry, however, didn't escape injury. It listed way to the starboard side, throwing the passengers and their captors to the deck.

Battered as he was, Harry clung on to the tangle of wreckage. He was wet and bloody, but still functioning. Functional, too, was his .44 Magnum, which was perhaps more to the point.

He found himself drifting closer toward the ferry until he was directly opposite the stern. To his surprise, he saw a part of the lower deck had become exposed and here water was flowing in at a slow, but inexorable rate.

Using his arms to paddle, Harry managed to draw himself up flush with the ferry. His movements went unnoticed; or so he assumed from the absence of gunfire directed toward him.

On all sides of the bay, launches and cutters, many with machine guns mounted on their bows, were beginning to materialize. Harry could hear loud, but indistinct voices booming out of megaphones. They were no doubt demanding the hijackers surrender. In answer, there was another rattle of gunfire.

The opening was narrow, but Harry struggled to squeeze through it, and at last succeeded. It was unnaturally dark. The lights seemed to have gone out. Until his eyes could adjust, the only thing he was conscious of was the water he was standing in up to his knees.

He advanced cautiously, bumped up against an object. He reached down so he could determine what it was. A fender of a car. He was in the hold where the passengers parked their vehicles. Little by little, he could make them out, rows of Chryslers, Fords, Chevys, four-wheel-drives and U-Haul vans.

Way in the distance, he discerned the steps leading up to the passenger deck. He trusted he'd sowed enough confusion so no one would notice when he finally made his appearance on deck.

Slogging through the gathering water he found the steps. Mounting them as quickly as possible, he pushed against the door he found waiting at the top of the steps. It refused to give.

Probably, the hijacker had barricaded it earlier to prevent anyone from seeking refuge in the cars. There was no lock on the door so he couldn't very well shoot it off. He imagined some object of rather formidable size had been used to block it from the other side.

Not being too pleased about the prospect of being stranded in the hold and drowning along with an array of motorized vehicles, he redoubled his efforts by applying his entire weight against the door.

He hoped there was another door somewhere closeby, one that would possibly be less difficult to force open. Back into the water he went in search of it. Out of sheer habit, he glanced down at his watch and saw that its glass face had cracked, but the phosphorescent digits were still registering, indicating that the inner mechanism of the thing

hadn't given out. In any case, it was nearly five-thirty. Another half an hour and Sheila was going to start worrying about what had happened to him.

The water had risen to the extent that the cars were partially covered, leaving only their windshields still visible. When Harry surveyed the rows of drowning vehicles, he happened to notice glimmering off the windshield of a bright lavender VW, a startling gold light. This light had to be reflecting off something, and he began to hunt for its source.

He found it on the starboard side of the ferry; a hatchway enough ajar to allow in a trickle of October evening light that the VWs windshield had managed to intensify.

Opening the hatch, he saw he'd ended up on a passageway that seemed to skirt the length of the deck. Although he could hear the chopper rumbling somewhere overhead, and an indeterminate number of motor launches stirring up the surrounding waters, he couldn't see anything. Certainly he saw no people. He imagined they were squeezed into the forward deck, where it would be easier for the hijackers to keep an eye on his captives.

Where the ferry had been listing before, it was now stationary. Though there was some ominous groaning coming from its lower decks—like an asthmatic's wheezing—indicating that all was not well with the vessel. From way across the bay, Harry could see there was a mist beginning to form, and from somewhere in the distance a foghorn bellowed feebly.

Cautiously, he made his way along the narrow deck, maintaining hold of the railing as his shoes were so wet he was constantly in danger of slipping and falling overboard. With the approaching mist and the fading light characteristic of this time of day, it was a wonder he glimpsed the shadow as it fell across his path.

He flattened himself against the wall, waiting.

A man called out, "Dick, is that you?"

Who Dick might be was hardly his concern. But it did underscore the possibility that more than one person was involved in the take-over of the ferry. It also meant that while Dick's identity might be of little relevance, his whereabouts surely were. Harry couldn't help looking behind him to see if maybe the mysterious Dick was there. But no, no one was there at all.

"Dick, why the fuck don't you answer me?" the man called again, more insistently, not at all pleased Dick was being so unobliging.

Harry thought now that there had to be a minimum of three hijackers. There was this clown who still hadn't revealed himself,

there was Dick who seemed to have disappeared, and he presumed there was at least one up front, keeping the passengers under guard. They must be paralyzed with fear, Harry thought. Not a sound could be heard from them.

"Dick?" the man called again, but his voice betrayed his growing doubt. He knew someone was there, and it didn't seem to be Dick, and once this conclusion dawned on him, it placed him in a position where he had to do something.

He decided to lob a grenade in Harry's direction. But since he had not the slightest notion of who or what he was aiming at, Harry was spared instant obliteration. The grenade, instead of landing on the deck, skipped over the railing and plummeted into the bay. A moment later it detonated, causing the water to erupt, drenching half the length of the boat while simultaneously setting it in motion again. Whether the ferry had been damaged or whether it was simply the convulsive surge of water around it, Harry had no way of determining. But it sure as hell felt as though the damn thing was going under the way it tilted way to the starboard side. It was all Harry could do to hang on. But hang on he did, and after two or three very tense minutes, the ferry, more or less, righted itself. Still, the groaning of machinery down below sounded worse than before.

Hearing someone behind him, a noisy sound of sloshing accompanied by curses. Harry turned and saw, not more than ten yards away, a man in a windbreaker, with a duffel cap shadowing his eyes. Harry had the feeling this was the elusive Dick.

Dick obviously had not been expecting to find Harry here. His face contained a look of such astonishment, it was almost comical. Like a twelve-year-old boy caught by his mother with a dirty book. Too late, he attempted to raise the Baretta he gripped. The .44 took him in the right shoulder, catapulting him over the railing and into the water. For an instant Harry could see his face, or rather just his continuingly astounded eyes and his improbable duffel cap. Then nothing at all except a gathering circle of blood on the water's surface.

Now he could hear shouting. There was one hell of a racket, people screaming and exhorting one another to take cover. A series of shots came in angry reply, but they seemed to have no effect. No one fell quiet. From elsewhere on the disabled craft, the echo of a great many footsteps reverberated down the decks and passageways. Harry guessed the hostages had perceived an opportunity to escape and were doing everything possible to exploit it.

He raced down the deck, saw in front of him a series of stairs leading to the bridge, which he promptly mounted. Although in doing this, he almost was knocked back down by a panicking businessman

who wielded his attaché case as if it were a lethal weapon. No doubt he was thinking this was one hell of a way to end a hard day at the office. A hijacking was no substitute for a cocktail.

Attaining the bridge, Harry discovered another armed man, who stood viewing the confusion on the deck below. He seemed uncertain how to reassert his authority. He might have wanted to shoot at somebody, but couldn't quite make up his mind who. By now, his intended targets had scattered so he was left with no one.

Except for Harry. He might not have seen Harry—and how could he when he was looking away from him?—but he evidently sensed his presence for all at once he dropped to the deck, and attempted in a clumsy motion to direct his shotgun toward this unexpected invader. Clumsy he might have been, but he was not without a certain manual dexterity. The weapon he possessed was the sort hunters use when they want to bring down wild game in the middle of African jungles and don't want to take the risk of getting too close to their quarry. The noise it produced was deafening. God knows what it could do if it tore a hole in one.

Harry was engulfed in a cloud of smoke, his lungs stung with the pungent venom of it, but the shot had missed him by a distance he would rather not measure. The force of the blast, however, had disoriented him, and his ears were ringing painfully. Barely able to see, he fired just at the moment his antagonist loosened a second round. The ringing grew more painful.

It was enough to try a man's patience thought Harry as he fired back.

The round from the Magnum hurtled the man back and over the bridge to the deck below. He came down with a tremendous thud and lay where he'd fallen, unmoving. Still alive, he kept puckering his lips, licking them dry of the blood that kept gathering.

Gazing out toward the portside, Harry watched the police launches approaching, maybe a dozen of them, each with their contingent of solemn-looking men with enough arms and ammunition to achieve the takeover of some forgotten banana republic. But they held their fire while they circled the ferry. One man was standing at the prow of one of these launches, calling out to the hijackers to consider the odds and surrender. That no one was answering seemed not to daunt him at all, he went right on with his shouting.

But there was enough for the police to occupy themselves for there were passengers diving into the water. All they cared about was getting the hell off the ship, and damned if they could swim. Harry caught sight of the man with the attaché case. Whatever was inside

must have been very important because as he swam, he tried awkwardly to keep it above water with one upraised hand.

Harry was far from convinced that the danger was over in spite of the fact he'd killed one of the hijackers and critically injured the other. He was still working on the assumption there were at least three men involved in the seizure of the vessel. But when he reconnoitered the decks, he found only some very terrified people who were waiting to be rescued, preferring to stay right where they were rather than throw themselves into the bay. Until Harry indicated he was a police officer, their faces were filled with apprehension. Seeing that Harry was carrying a huge handgun, they naturally decided that he was in on the hijacking as well.

Harry asked them if they could point out anyone else who might have held them at gunpoint, but they were unable to help him. Everyone had his own story and one story inevitably contradicted the other.

Harry did discover something of interest though: an elegantly designed automatic manufactured by Ingram, a fine thing to have when one wanted to riddle one's opponents with several hundred rounds a minute. It was not the sort of weapon people generally abandoned like umbrellas forgotten in a closet. Harry presumed whoever the third member of the boarding party was, had decided to jump into the water along with dozens of other fleeing people in the hope he could avoid being arrested.

But how, Harry wondered, could he hope to pull something like that off—unless he was disguised? To test his theory, he returned to the man he'd shot out of the bridge. He'd given up licking his lips free of blood—he hadn't the energy anymore—and so the blood was pouring copiously out of his mouth and beginning to cover the whole of his chest. He was still alive, but barely, and his breathing was shallow and irregular.

To test his theory, Harry reached down, pinching the lush brown moustache, then yanked it hard. Not only did the moustache come off, but so did the entire face. It had proved to be an uncannily realistic mask, composed of some rubber-like substance. The mask certainly had a healthier appearance than the flesh that lay beneath it. There was more color in it at any rate. Nor was he an attractive man, his features were thin and angular. He was better off with the mask.

The officer in the prow of the closest launch was still shouting some message through his megaphone. Harry couldn't make out what he was saying, but he figured he might as well reply and welcome him on board. Just then he remembered the time, and gazing down at his watch, found it was a few minutes after six.

If I work this right, he thought, I should get to Sheila's only an hour late. It was a goal to strive for anyhow.

CHAPTER

Three

It was the unshakeable conviction of Grant Turner that the world was coming to an end. It would not end, as the poet said, with a whimper, he was goddamn sure of that. No, it would end with one hell of a bang. But that the world, and the human race along with it, was shortly to blow itself to smithereens was of scarce concern to Turner. On the contrary, he welcomed the occurrence, believing he would be one of the few—he'd go so far as to say one of the lucky few—who would survive the apocalypse. On the morning after World War III, he would walk out, in suitably protective gear of course, into the radioactive air and survey the waste of the city of San Francisco.

Turner was an ordinary looking man. That might have been his secret. He could have been a lawyer or a flunky for some corporate firm, with his wire rim glasses and his Brooks Brothers wardrobe. Only on weekends and late in the afternoons, when he'd left work for the day, would he do a Superman number, changing into a paramilitary outfit, pack up his arms and his provisions and set off into the woods. There he would take target practice, camp out, and subject himself to tests of all kinds. He had friends, but they were few. Mostly he had followers, those who looked upon him as their commander, the man who would lead them when the government had collapsed and millions lay dead, annihilated instantly because they happened to be standing at Ground Zero at the wrong time.

Not that Turner was simply waiting for the next war, caching tins of food and barrels of fresh water in his fallout shelter. No, Grant Turner was already capitalizing on people's fears of worsening times. He didn't need a damn war, he just needed panic and uneasiness and rampant inflation. The more people invested in collectibles, in antiques, in gold and silver, in Impressionist paintings, in Rolls Royces, and rare stamps, the happier Turner was. He could not afford to buy any of these things, but that mattered not at all to him. He stole what he wanted. He did not especially like seeing people killed during his heists—it meant that the police would investigate more thoroughly—but he would not lose sleep if that happened. The way he looked at it, they would die anyway when they dropped the big one.

It was not what his associates and acquaintances would have

expected—Grant Turner changing from thief to leading survivalist and future commander of a post-holocaust elite military unit.

But everyone would have had to admit Turner was lucky. He should have been arrested and convicted long ago for the various felonies he had committed. Except for one youthful escapade in his hometown of Minneapolis, he'd managed to keep his fingerprints out of police records and his body out of prison cells. A great many who knew him, considered Grant Turner a law-abiding citizen with a penchant for hunting and mountain climbing. To all outward appearances, he was a bureaucratic functionary laboring in the county clerk's office for no other reason than to collect his pension. They had no idea his only motivation for remaining in what was, after all, a dull and unrewarding job was to gain access to various deeds and title claims, giving him the leads he required to plan his raids on the very rich.

He occupied an office by himself. It smelled musty, as was to be expected with bundles of decaying records piled up, waiting until the day someone got around to putting them all on microfilm. There was no window in the office and that was what Gallant remembered most about it: the absence of any window, and the must in the dead air.

Something was missing though, a large framed painting of a rustic scene with a village and mountains in the background.

There was a bleached rectangle on the wall where it had been.

Turner looked much the same, his hair was sparse, but otherwise the six years had been good to him. For someone imminently expecting the end of the world, he appeared happier than any man had a right to be.

Because he could use the office as he wanted—with so many years on the job, he had his share of privileges and perks—he was able to conduct his illegal operations from it without fear of interruption.

Raising his eyes, Turner regarded the man who stood before him. He didn't seem too pleased by what he saw. "You look like shit," he said in a quiet voice.

"I'm supposed to be a corpse, remember? Corpses generally don't look in the peak of health."

Turner swivelled about on his revolving chair so that he was no longer facing Gallant. He was instead facing the blank spot on the wall. "What can I do for you?"

"I told you what I needed over the phone."

"Yes, you did. Money you want, is that right?"

"And a car and papers, a Social Security card, driver's license, that sort of thing. It shouldn't be any problem for you."

“No, it shouldn’t . . .” Turner agreed, swivelling back around to look into Gallant’s face again. “Here,” he said, tossing over a photograph to the other side of the desk. “You recognize that house?”

It was a mansion actually, that must contain well over forty rooms. While the photograph was not large enough to show all the grounds, it certainly suggested they were sizable, covering several acres that stretched over a hillside, above a body of bright blue water.

Gallant gazed admiringly at it for several moments. “I can’t say I’ve ever laid eyes on it before. But it sure looks like a pretty place.” Especially after a stretch in prison, he was about to say.

“Thirty-six thousand dollars a year in real estate taxes alone,” Turner said. To Turner it wasn’t enough that a residence exuded an aura of wealth, he had to know the exact dollars and cents value of it as well.

Gallant was suitably impressed and let out a low whistle.

“Why did you think I might know this?”

“A man named Jay Silk lives there. It’s in the woods right above Paradise Drive, ten, fifteen miles to the north of Sausalito.”

“Jay Silk? Should the name mean anything to me?”

Turner smiled. He delighted in springing surprises, but he abhorred the idea of being on the receiving end of them, which was why he was constantly anticipating the collapse of the economy followed shortly by the obliteration of the world. He didn’t want to ever be surprised.

“It should, yes. But seeing as it doesn’t, I will take it upon myself to enlighten you.”

All this while Gallant tried to puzzle out what this house had to do with getting his money and his credentials and his car so he could undertake his mission of vengeance.

“Go ahead.”

Turner liked to keep people in suspense which was why he took as long as he did coming to a point. “Jay Silk is the widowed father of a woman named Sheila Richmond.” His smile grew broader. “Now there’s a name I should think would be familiar to you.”

Gallant was speechless. He needed Turner, but he never really liked him, and now he knew why: Turner was always one step ahead of him.

“It’s familiar to me, yes,” he said, trying his best, and failing, to keep his voice neutral. But his mounting excitement was too palpable; his face was flushed and he realized his hands were trembling enough for Turner to notice.

“How would you like to go work for Mr. Silk? He’s retired now, but he lives very comfortably on his investments and still leads a lifestyle that most people would find enviable. I am told he requires a chauffeur with good references. A man who would, from time to time, have to double as a jack of all trades. You could do that, couldn’t you, Jimmy, act as a jack of all trades?”

It was as if Turner had been reading his mind. Gallant struggled to find the right words. On the one hand, he was grateful to be given an opportunity he might never have managed on his own. On the other hand, he resented Turner for preempting him, for seeing right through him, and ultimately for obligating him.

But as he was penniless and without identity, he was in no position to decline the offer. He wasn’t sure how this scheme of Turner’s could succeed either. “This guy Silk would have seen pictures of me. Sooner or later, he’ll figure out who I am.”

Looking again at the photograph in his hands, he had the sense a man with a house like this would enjoy an immense amount of power.

“You let me worry about that. We’re going to fix you up so that that won’t be any problem. And don’t forget, you’re supposed to be dead.”

“Yes, that’s right.” He’d momentarily forgotten this crucial fact himself.

“And once we get you fixed up we’re going to give you a bit of schooling.”

“Schooling?”

“You know anything about art? Can you distinguish a Leger from a Braque from a Miro? You know what Wedgewood looks like? Can you distinguish a pre-Columbian tapestry from a fake? I didn’t think so. Well, you’re going to learn. By the time we’re through, they could appoint you curator of the Getty Museum.”

Gallant frowned. “Is this thing going to take long?”

“What’s the matter with you, you afraid of a little education?” He laughed. “No, Jimmy, it won’t take long. Nothing I set out to do ever takes long.”

It wasn’t until after midnight that Gallant was able to free himself from Turner. Turner had insisted on taking him to what he called his retreat—somewhere deep in a wooded area just north of Santa Rosa—where a group of wild-eyed fanatics were in training with M-16’s and a variety of .45’s and .38’s Turner said were U.S. Army issue. There was no telling where they’d gotten them. Gallant guessed they’d pillaged a stockade one day.

There, among this deceptively rustic setting, Turner had found new clothes for him and a car, a ’76 Plymouth that could have done with some shock absorbers, and a gun. The gun was an interesting one that Gallant had never used before. It was a Dan Wesson—Dan being a relation to the Wesson of Smith & Wesson—and came accompanied by six barrels ranging from a two-inch stub to a twelve-inch attachment that was better for bringing down a buck deer than a human being. It took both .357 and .38 ammunition.

Turner also provided his former associate with two hundred dollars —“enough to get you started” was how he put it. Aside from the wad of cash, Turner bestowed upon him a Social Security card, advising him the other I.D.’s would have to wait until later. He did not say how much later, but Gallant was satisfied that he’d obtained this much. He really didn’t expect Turner to be so cooperative, and began more and more to wonder how much Turner expected of him in return. It would be a higher price than a simple appraisal of Jay Silk’s collectibles he suspected.

Promising he’d return to Turner’s retreat the following afternoon, Gallant drove away in his newly acquired car. He regretted the fact that he lacked a driver’s license, but it couldn’t be helped. He’d just have to wait for Turner to get him one.

It was comforting to have a gun in his possession again, but this was not the gun he intended to employ. This was a gun meant only as insurance. The gun he had his heart set on, the only gun that would suit his purpose, belonged to Harry Callahan.

CHAPTER

Four

Gallant didn't know exactly why he decided on going back to Sheila Richmond's apartment. He hadn't been able to decide what his fascination was with her. But there was something that drew him to her. He still had to get himself a place to stay that night—he supposed some cheap hotel or boarding house would do, might as well stretch his two hundred dollars as far as he could—but he wasn't really sleepy, exhausted yes, but sleepy no.

He pulled up across the street from her apartment and looked up to her windows. The lights were still on. He could vaguely make out a woman. She seemed to be reading a book or else watching television. He wished he'd remembered to ask Turner for a pair of binoculars. It would have helped at this point. But the more he scrutinized the figure in the window the more he was convinced this wasn't Sheila. Wrong build, wrong way of moving, wrong something.

No more than ten minutes had elapsed since he'd begun his surveillance when another car came around the corner, then slowed, and came to a stop just in front of the building. A man got out and opened the door for the woman sitting on the passenger side.

It was Sheila. And the man?—he was sure he knew the man. His resemblance to Harry Callahan was so striking Gallant was positive that was who it was.

What was this? He could scarcely believe his eyes. Fate, which for so many years had borne down on James Gallant and given him nothing but abuse, had suddenly, mysteriously, taken a liking to him. Everything was going right.

The two walked up the stairs and went into the building. Some minutes later a taxi appeared and the young woman Gallant had seen originally, came down. This must be the babysitter, he reasoned, for he now recalled that the cop he'd killed had a kid. Of course, it was the babysitter.

Gallant hoped to catch a glimpse of something intriguing in the light of the window, but the light was soon extinguished. Everything was left to Gallant's imagination. And it was one hell of an imagination, developed to a highly sensitive degree after six years of prison.

Since Harry seemed likely to spend the night, it stood to reason that he would at one point or another put aside his .44. It got in the way when one tried to make love, and it wasn't very comfortable to sleep with either.

Gallant resigned himself to waiting. He waited for what seemed like hours, killing time listening to all-night talk shows. Then, at quarter to two, he left his car and ascended the steps to the apartment building. The front doors were unlocked, but not so the one just inside the vestibule.

What Gallant didn't know about breaking and entering before he was sent away he'd learned once he was in jail. The geniuses that were behind bars could have solved the problems of the world if only their minds were bent in that direction, Gallant thought.

It said S. Richmond on the door of her apartment. Having thwarted the lock downstairs so silently and efficiently, he hoped to accomplish the same thing here. He certainly did not want to awaken anybody.

There were two locks. One was as easily defeated as the other. Fate was still with him. He had no idea how long this situation would persist, but he might as well go with it for so long as it did.

Now, the risk was stumbling into something in the darkness and toppling over the television set or a ceramic dish. But a trickle of light was seeping in from down the hall—the bathroom he saw—and so at least he had some sense of where he was going.

Suddenly, there was a shriek. Good God, he thought. I haven't made a fucking sound! It must be the kid. He stood stock still, paralyzed. Then he heard a door opening. He slipped behind a couch and peered into the gloom to see what was happening. What had started as a shriek had turned into a prolonged scream, broken at intervals by breathless sobs.

Then Sheila appeared, a silhouetted figure in a white, nearly diaphanous gown, sweeping across the hallway in the direction of her daughter's bedroom.

"What's wrong, sweetheart?" he heard her say.

The child's sobbing grew more muffled.

"Were you having a bad dream?" Sheila asked.

Gallant forsook his hiding place, and slipped quietly down the length of the corridor until he stood just outside the door to her bedroom. He was gambling on a great deal, he realized, but if there was one thing he had learned in his life it was that procrastination got one no place.

He risked a glance into the bedroom. At first, he could see very

little, but after a few seconds was able to distinguish various objects. There was someone in the bed. Harry Callahan. He was seized by the impulse to kill him now. In spite of the disturbance, he remained asleep, his head burrowed in the pillows. It would be no trouble, taking him out now. But that would be too easy. It would deny Gallant the satisfaction of a long drawn-out revenge. It wasn't just Harry's death he craved, it was his humiliation.

The little girl in the other room was still whimpering which meant Sheila would be detained a few minutes more. Soundlessly, he entered the bedroom, his eyes hungrily searching for the gun he knew must be somewhere nearby. He was sufficiently well acquainted with the habits of his onetime arresting officer to know he was seldom separated from the Magnum that had become his virtual trademark.

At last he saw it, snugly fitted into its holster and resting on top of the night table immediately by Harry's side.

This was better than he could have hoped. He'd prayed he could simply snatch it and get away as easily as he'd got in. But this was not to be.

Of course, he did have the advantage. He held the gun, and Harry didn't. He could take the Magnum at little peril to himself. But Harry might recognize him, so might Sheila. His deception would be exposed, his plan sabotaged from the outset. No, it was crucial that the author of this theft remain unknown.

Acutely conscious of each step he took, he was thankful the bedroom was carpeted, so he scarcely made any sound at all as he crossed its length. After what seemed an eternity, he reached the night table. He listened to Harry's breathing. It was regular enough to reassure him that he was still asleep. But at one point he stirred and for a fraction of a second Gallant was certain he'd woken. Instead he changed his position so that his face was now turned toward him. His eyes remained shut, but the effect was disconcerting.

He extended his arm until his hand was poised directly over the gun.

Just then he heard the door to the child's room close quietly. He'd been concentrating so much on Harry that he'd completely forgotten about Sheila.

There was no time to take the gun, leave the bedroom, and vanish down the corridor without running right into Sheila. The only thing he could think of to do was to drop down where he was and slide under the bed.

Presently, Sheila reappeared. "Harry? Harry, are you awake?" she asked, but all she elicited was a barely audible groan that might or

might not have been intended as a response. “That’s all right,” she said, “go back to sleep.”

The bed sagged slightly as she got into it. While Harry lay motionless, she seemed to take forever returning to sleep. She tossed and turned, and just when Gallant was convinced that she finally was asleep, she’d move again. All he could do was stay where he was, trying his best to subdue his mounting panic. He kept imagining her insomnia would keep her awake until dawn, and even if she dropped off, Harry would wake, and he would never have the opportunity he desperately needed to make his escape unobserved.

But then it seemed that she had fallen asleep. When ten minutes had passed without any movement on her part, he decided he would risk crawling out again. He poked his head out. When nothing untoward occurred, he went further until he was completely revealed. He was relieved to see Harry had turned again so his face was no longer visible.

Without rising to his feet, Gallant raised his hand and groped till his fingers touched the Magnum. He took hold of it as though it was a treasure of incalculable value. And in a way it was, if only to him and Harry.

Even though it was a temptation, he suppressed the urge to stand up and run for the door. Instead, he painstakingly remained on all fours, gradually inching his way toward the exit. In one respect, fate had continued to be good to him. Sheila had left the door partially open, probably so she could hear her daughter should she awaken again. Little did she realize, the nightmare was not in her daughter’s head, but right here, in her own bedroom.

He looked back once he reached the door, but there was no indication that he’d disturbed either Harry or Sheila. They slept on as peacefully as the dead.

One night, he thought, resting his eyes on Sheila’s unconscious form, he was going to take Harry’s place in her bed.

Notwithstanding his tiredness, Gallant was far too exhilarated to sleep. Having achieved so much success in such a short period of time, he felt it was only appropriate to celebrate. On Lombard he found a little place that was still open and serving although it was apparent from the doleful look on the bartender’s face that it wouldn’t remain open very much longer. Gallant sped up his celebration and drank fast.

By the time he had set loose enough Cuervo Gold in his system to intoxicate a regiment, he realized that he could not wait until the following day to institute his plan. No, there was no sense in delaying.

It was a little short of three-thirty in the morning. He wanted it so that when the hour of seven struck, and Harry was ready to rise and face the day, it would already be too late.

Six years gives one a lot of time. Gallant was remembered by his fellow cellmates as something of a student although as a high school dropout, his scholarly habits were a recent acquisition. Be that as it may, Gallant spent as many hours as he was permitted in the prison library. What particularly compelled his interest were old newspapers, especially the local ones. That way he could keep track of Harry. He could also keep track of Harry's enemies.

Now he intended to do what Harry never could, whether because of the constraints of the law or reasons of simple humanity. He was going to kill off all of his enemies—one by one.

CHAPTER

Five

Edward J. T. Gallagher was getting on in years, and needed little sleep. Four o'clock in the morning would often find him seated in his study, reading obscure interpretations of the law or revising decisions he would soon hand down in his court.

Gallagher was a senior judge on the appeals court and in the twenty-one years he'd served on the bench, he had always managed to provoke controversy. Denounced as a liberal do-gooder, a friend of the criminal, the judge had weathered a great many storms in his time. He had even survived several attempts on the part of outraged legislators to have him impeached and removed. His critics accused him of setting low bail for murderers and rapists, of letting hardened criminals off either with light sentences or else setting them free on probation. There were many who thought him senile and this opinion had been commonly held even when the judge was two decades younger.

Gallagher and his wife of thirty years lived in a modest frame two-story house a few blocks up from Hyde Pier. The study was on the first floor, the bedroom on the second.

The judge was too absorbed in his work to take notice of the sound of the backdoor lock clicking open. It was possible that even if his concentration had not been so pronounced, he wouldn't have heard for he was partially deaf. This handicap, when it became known to his detractors, was taken as further indication of his incompetence. The reason, it was said, he handed down such light sentences was because he never really heard the testimony.

Not until Gallant was standing right in back of him, no more than a dozen feet away, at the doorway to the study, did Gallagher sense something was not quite right, and turned around.

He lowered his glasses, because they were meant for reading, not for seeing anything farther away than the page, and stared at the intruder.

"Who the hell are you, sir?" he demanded, showing not the slightest sign he was frightened.

"A dead man," the intruder replied.

The judge frowned. This was not the sort of response he'd expected.

"What are you doing in my house? If you don't leave right away, I mean to notify the police."

The judge couldn't identify the intruder though there was something vaguely familiar about the man. That the stranger had not yet produced any weapon he felt was reassuring. But what did he want? If he had come to rob his house surely he would have started to do so by now.

When the man did not reply, the judge asked, "Were you ever in my court?"

"No," the man said. "I was in a lot of courts in my time, but never in yours."

The judge shook his head. Sometimes, the people whose trials he presided over sought him out for one thing or another, believing mistakenly he could function in the role of a social worker or psychiatrist.

"Then what can I do for you?"

At that moment, his wife called to him from upstairs. "Ed, what is is? Is someone there?"

"It's all right, dear," he shouted up.

It was then Gallant slipped his right hand underneath his jacket and removed the .44.

Gallagher paled when he saw the gun. In all the years he'd been on the bench, nothing like this had ever happened to him. Now he was convinced the man was dangerous.

"Whatever you want, please, we have so little, but you are welcome to it all. But please, please don't hurt us. I am an old man and my wife . . ."

Gallant was disinterested in listening to his feeble appeals for mercy. "You know a friend of mine named Callahan, Harry Callahan?"

"Callahan," the judge said, rummaging through his memory to place the name. "Yes, I believe I once . . ."

Again, Gallant wouldn't allow him to finish a sentence. "Well, then, this is for him."

The .44 was much louder than Gallant had expected. The recoil was so powerful that it nearly threw him off balance. He wasn't used to handling a gun so big.

When he recovered from the shock of the blast, he looked to the chair where the judge had been sitting. The judge wasn't there any longer. He was sprawled out on top of the desk which had, in turn,

toppled over to the floor. Blood soaked through his bathrobe and his arms were splayed out so he seemed to be assuming the posture of Jesus on the cross. His eyes were still open but they were rapidly filming over. There was no question he was dead. Out of the wound blood was slowly leaking onto the pages of a California statute book.

Not unexpectedly, the blast had been audible upstairs. Rather than stay put, which would have been the wisest course of action, Gallagher's wife had come rushing down to see what had happened and she now stood at the door to the study, horrified by the sight of her murdered husband. Her eyes bugged from their sockets, her jaw gaped open, and it seemed she was incapable of producing any sound.

She was in her mid-fifties, by the looks of her, a woman who had never been beautiful. Gallant had only come to kill Gallagher. He hadn't even known he had a wife, hadn't even considered the possibility.

Had he been wearing a mask, he might have permitted her to live. But the fact was he wasn't. Until Turner had his face altered, as he'd promised, he could still be recognized.

"I hate to do this," he said apologetically.

Too late, she reacted, and turned, and tried to run from him.

With no urgency at all, Gallant raised the .44 and, sighting it on the back of her head, on the bun of coarse graying hair, he fired.

This time he was better prepared for the recoil, and it didn't unbalance him the way it had before. Betty Gallagher seemed for an instant to rise in the air, like a marionette suddenly tugged up and offstage. Her head blazed as though fire danced from it. But it wasn't fire, it was blood. A torrent of blood.

Something sticky had gotten on the legs of his pants. He looked down and saw it was a part of what had been inside the woman's skull. He did his best to expunge the stain with soap and water, but it only seemed to make it worse. A conspicuous dark oblong patch remained. It was a good thing, he thought, that Turner had given him several changes of clothes.

Especially, as this was only the beginning. There was much to accomplish before the sun came up.

Morris Page lived in a crumbling building in an area guidebooks, if they described it at all, referred to generally as "seedy." It lay in sight of the Yerba Buena Project and the new Moscone Convention Center which was still under construction. From what Gallant could determine, the building was a transient hotel. There was a sign to that

effect hanging over the doorway, but it was so faded it was impossible to know whether it applied any longer. Here and there the windows were lit, but mostly they were dark. The shades were pulled down against the chill nighttime air.

Gallant had never met Page, yet he believed he knew him as well as anyone. For the fact was, Page was a man much like himself, a convicted murderer, a loner, a loser in the eyes of the world. Unlike Gallant, however, he was out of jail legally, having served only three years of a five year sentence, meted out by none other than the late Judge Gallagher.

Page had plea-bargained, ratting on his accomplices, and consequently escaping with minimal punishment while his companions were put away for life. Page and his luckless companions were found guilty of holding up a branch of the Bank of America and killing one of the guards. Page pointed out at his trial that he wasn't the one who had pulled the trigger. Gallant believed the only reason he hadn't was the lack of opportunity. Page was not bound by conscience certainly. Nor was he given to sudden fits of compassion; it wasn't in his nature.

Of course, it had been Harry who'd arrested Morris Page. It was no secret that Harry opposed the mitigation of his sentence.

So they did have something in common, Page and himself: a hatred of a homicide investigator and several years wasted behind bars.

Gallant found the door unlocked and stepped inside a hallway that smelled like eggs gone bad. An imitation Tiffany lamp was suspended over a desk to his right. A register was open on the desk, but there was no one there to tend it.

Behind the desk, Gallant saw a succession of mailboxes. The names and room numbers were inscribed on adhesive tape below each of them. Morris Page was listed as residing in Room 310. His box was empty.

As he ascended the stairs, he began hearing voices, raucous and loud, and punctuated by frequent bursts of laughter. It seemed even at this late hour a party was in progress. The party turned out to be going on in a room just down the hall from 310.

Well, it didn't concern him. In fact, the noise might be helpful. It would drown out the sound of a gunshot. Bending over, he looked under the door of 310 but could see no light. He concluded that Page must be asleep.

Nonetheless, he was as quiet as he could possibly be. He tried the door, and to his surprise, found it open. With the .44 in hand, he entered the room ready to fire on the sleeping figure he anticipated

seeing. But the bed was empty.

He risked flicking on the overhead light. A predictably dreary room was revealed. Cockroaches lined in formation along the wall mirror, scurried quickly back into the haven of the darkness.

There was no bathroom—that must be down the hall somewhere—but there was a sink, whose drain was ringed with a yellowish stain, attesting to the use to which it was put late at night when Page balked at leaving his room to relieve his bladder.

Gallant was far more disappointed than he thought he'd be. To have come all the way to this part of town, and come so close, he could not bear the idea of being denied his victim. Extinguishing the light, he left Page's room. A haggard old man with the blood vessels broken in his nose, was shuffling down the corridor, clad only in a sleeveless undershirt, and carrying a dirty towel.

"Old man, you know Morris Page?"

The man stopped and screwed his eyes up at Gallant as though he'd just arrived from Mars. He grunted and indicated the door from which all the loud voices and laughter were originating.

As soon as he vanished into the bathroom, Gallant stepped up to the door marked 322. Listening attentively, he determined there were four, possibly five, men inside. From the desperation of their laughter and the shrillness of their voices, Gallant sensed that they'd been drinking quite heavily, and for so many hours, they would be slow to react to any danger.

He had a picture of Page in his mind, and given the time, he might have been able to pick him out from a group, but in a situation like this there would be no time—he had to presume that men who lived in such a place would be armed. While he could have waited in Page's room until he returned, he hadn't the patience. No, he thought, he would take the whole lot of them out.

Grasping hold of the brass knob, he turned it slowly. But the door refused to give. These men were not that trusting. He could, of course, shoot the lock off, but that would alert the room's occupants, and he didn't want that to happen.

So, impatient as he was, he decided to bide his time in the expectation that with all the drinking they were doing, sooner or later one of them would come stumbling out to use the bathroom.

It was sooner rather than later. He stood back, against the wall, when he heard the door opening. A stocky man in an open white shirt appeared. Gallant took him wholly by surprise, digging the barrel of the .44 into his enormous stomach.

The man, who was not Page, was so shaken that all he could do was stammer unintelligibly and raise his hands. Gallant prodded him back into the room. He caught a glimpse of three men sitting around a bridge table, with a couple of decks of cards and several empty and half-empty bottles of liquor between them.

Giving them no chance to calculate the odds, he kicked the door shut, then discharged his appropriated weapon at point-blank range into the man's gut. A ragged bloody stain took form on the white of his shirt as he pitched backwards, overturning the table, and causing a furious clatter as the liquor bottles shattered.

"What the fuck!" one of the men cried as he attempted to take shelter behind the fallen table.

They were all shouting at once. Only Gallant was silent. He dropped to one knee, fired at a second figure who was scrambling in the direction of an adjacent room.

With a piercing scream, he catapulted into the air, and smashed down in a lifeless heap. A moment later, a bullet whistled past Gallant and was impacted in the plaster of the wall directly behind him. He cursed himself for taking too long. There were still two survivors, one of them his intended victim, Page. He was practically certain it was Page who'd managed to get his weapon out in time to return the fire.

In an exposed position himself, Gallant threw himself to the floor just as a second round sped toward him. It opened a hole in the door. Aiming straight at the underside of the bridge table, he fired again. There was never any doubt that the .44 had the strength to penetrate the fragile metal surface of the table and hit the man behind it.

He did not succeed in killing Page, only in wounding him. But the pain must have been fierce for it caused him to jerk up involuntarily so that Gallant had a view of his head. He fired again.

Suddenly, half of his face disappeared. There was just a single eyeball dangling in a welter of red. Then Page dropped out of sight.

One man remained. For a few moments, Gallant couldn't understand where he had gone. He walked into the other room and discovered him cowering beneath the bed. He lifted the mattress and regarded him, through the springs, with mild amusement.

"No, no, no, please," the man was mumbling, and Gallant listened to him for only a second. He could begin to make out the distant wail of sirens, which meant someone had summoned the police. He squeezed the tip of the .44 between the springs so that the gun virtually rested in the trapped man's hair.

Still imploring Gallant for mercy, he attempted to crawl out from under the bed.

Gallant hesitated, allowing the man to get his head into the open, thinking his victim's predicament was not so much different from what his had been in Sheila Richmond's apartment a few short hours ago. Then he discharged the gun.

The bullet entered at the base of the man's spine. He buckled once with a hideous scream, then flopped down. Blood was strewn all over the mattress Gallant was still holding up with one hand. But the man was not dead, he was writhing, still struggling to get out from underneath the bed. Gallant put another bullet into the back of his neck.

As soon as he stepped into the hall again, he found himself facing the same old man in the undershirt who'd directed him to room 322.

The old man looked stupified, partly with booze, partly with astonishment. There was no telling how long he'd been standing in front of the door.

When he saw Gallant, a trickle of urine started to run down his bony legs.

"You going to say something about this, old man?" Gallant asked in a deceptively casual voice.

The old man might have been mute, certainly he was terrified, for he said not a word. He just shook his head emphatically.

Gallant shrugged. "Sorry, I don't believe you."

He kept his eyes fixed on the old man while he brought up the .44 and shot him in the groin. He was hurtled back against the opposite wall and crumpled up with a sad shudder. He'd had such a tenuous hold on life in the first place, that it did not require even this much for him to abandon it completely.

There was a commotion coming from far down the hallway, and up from the floors below. Gallant was unconcerned. He took the stairs down at an easy pace. Someone might have observed him, a fleeting figure with flecks of blood on his clothing, but he doubted anyone would have obtained a good look at him. Even if a witness did step forward to give the police a description of a suspect, no one would link it to James William Gallant. James William Gallant was dead.

It was now getting early in the morning, but the skies were as black as they'd been at midnight. A scattering of gray clouds hinted at another day of little sun and sudden fog. The hour and the weather were of little importance to Gallant. It was difficult for him to believe he had achieved so much since his escape from prison. He couldn't quite remember exactly how many people he had killed during that time,

but it seemed to him eight was the correct figure.

To that number there now had to be added one more—unless other people got in the way as they had the habit of doing. This was a man named Marc Torio. Gallant recalled he lived in Oakland, in one of those anonymous towering apartment blocks not far from Lake Merritt. He had a piece of paper with the exact address written down on it that he dug out of his jacket pocket. It was soaked through with someone's blood and because it was, he had a problem deciphering the writing.

He got lost a couple of times. Somehow, in spite of the maps he consulted, he couldn't find the Oakland Bay Bridge. He kept missing a turn-off or going too far. It was growing patently obvious to him how really exhausted he was, and that he was pressing his luck by continuing his campaign of vengeance. If he had any sense he'd quit, find a place to sleep, and resume tomorrow. But now that he had a momentum going, he could not bear to suspend operations, even for a few hours' rest. Besides, he reasoned, there was just this one person left, this Marc Torio, before he could move onto other things.

The truth was he couldn't recollect why he had chosen Torio as a victim while he was in prison. Unquestionably, the man was an avowed enemy of Harry's, and it seemed to Gallant he had done some time, and that he had managed, even more cunningly than Page had, to evade the machinery of justice. But all the details of Torio's case had slipped his mind. He wasn't thinking straight. The gray clouds in the sky might just as well have been in his head. His vision wasn't much better. When he gazed out his windshield toward the lights of Oakland, which he'd finally located, more by pure chance than following the directions he'd determined from his maps, all he could see was a dull haze of pink and amber.

When he got to Oakland, he found an all-night diner and stopped for some coffee. There were only a few other patrons at the counter, and only one girl behind it. They all stared at him and then quickly averted their eyes in embarrassment. It was only then Gallant realized what a grotesque sight he must be presenting, with so much blood spattered on him. He didn't care to imagine how he smelled. He decided not to stay, but bolted up and returned to his car.

The sky was smudged gray, but it was finally getting light, signaling the arrival of the new day. Gallant was standing in the middle of an asphalt lot. Towering above him, on every side, were massive apartment buildings, one resembling the other. There was hardly any sound except for an occasional abrasive honk. He had read or been told somewhere that Lake Merritt was a refuge for wild ducks. He reasoned that was what he was hearing. Once in awhile, he'd look up

in the sky and see a bird swoop down.

He could find no one to ask for the location of the building he was searching for, so he wandered from one doorway to the other, trying to match the address to what was scrawled on the bloodstained paper he held in his hand. He saw his hand was shaking. How the hell was he going to shoot Marc Torio, assuming he could find him, with his hand shaking?

Eventually, he came upon the building he was hunting for. The apartment number, 8C, indicated that a N. Raphael lived there. It could be his information was erroneous. Either Torio had moved away or else had never lived here to begin with.

Well, he would have to discover for himself. The door to the inside hallway was locked. There was a buzzer to the left.

Gallant rang one apartment after another, avoiding only the apartment marked N. Raphael. As he expected, someone buzzed him in.

He tried to stop shaking, but couldn't. By the time he stepped out of the elevator on the eighth floor, his whole body was trembling. He was feverish, and his skin was drenched in sweat.

Standing in front of 8C, he put his ear to the door and listened. He thought he could make out a person's voice, but it was muffled, and indecipherable.

For almost three minutes, he struggled with the lock to get it open. It was a simple lock, and if he was less anxious, he could have had it open in half the time. At last it snapped, and he pushed against the door.

It wouldn't yield all the way. A brass chain was pulled taut in the gap between the door and wall.

It was a one-room apartment as far as Gallant could tell. The bed was situated along the opposite wall and there was a man and a woman in it, the sheets tangled about their naked bodies. A lamp in the far corner of the room was on, and Gallant had a fairly good view of the woman, though not of the man. The man might have been asleep, for he was partially obscured in darkness. But the woman was awake. It was possible she'd heard him opening the door because she was propped up on her arms, her eyes riveted on him, a very dazed expression on her face.

Gallant noticed she was not very pretty, but her body was a pleasing enough sight. One large breast was visible above the thicket of sheets.

"Marc, Marc, wake up," she was saying.

This was all that he needed to know. He assumed it was Marc Torio

she was attempting to rouse, and not some other.

Swiftly he raised the .44 above the level of the chain and shouted, “This one’s for Harry Callahan,” he fired at the sleeping figure.

The woman screamed. The man jerked out of bed, and for a second Gallant was certain he’d missed. But then he saw all the blood spilling from the man. He’d been thrown partways out of the bed and it appeared he was attempting to get himself erect. Gallant fired a second time, though his hand trembled uncontrollably. His shot struck the man in the chest and travelled through his body, hitting the woman in the ankle. Rather than continue shooting, he shut the door and ran for the elevator. It was unlikely the woman—the single witness he’d left alive this night—had gotten more than a fleeting glimpse of him. He wanted someone left alive to remember hearing the name Harry Callahan.

CHAPTER

Six

"You've seen the papers this morning?" Bressler was walking back and forth across the length of his office, his hands behind his back. Harry wouldn't say he looked angry so much as apoplectic. People about to collapse of a stroke might resemble his superior officer at this particular moment.

"I've seen the papers."

"And that's all you have to say?"

Harry nodded.

"In the space of six or seven hours, eight people were killed and one wounded, all with the same weapon. A .44 Magnum we fished out of Lake Merritt. One of the victims lived in Oakland, the rest were here in San Francisco, even so they lived in different parts of town which leads one to believe that our killer was doing a lot of travelling last night."

Harry allowed that this was the conclusion one could draw.

Bressler wasn't at all pleased by the lack of response from Harry. He expected a reasonable explanation. Frustrated, he went on, "Now, what connects all these victims, including a distinguished judge and his wife? Well, it turns out that at least a few of them were acquainted with you. I mean Marc Torio. I mean Judge Gallagher. I mean Morris Page. Do you deny that?"

Harry couldn't, and didn't.

"Now I am not for a moment suggesting that you are in any way responsible for these murders."

"That's good of you."

"No sarcasm. If there's one thing I can't tolerate, it's sarcasm from you."

"I sympathize."

Bressler gave him a malevolent look, but decided it best to continue. "All right, what we seem to have is a set-up. We even have a victim who says the murderer shouted your name. That's as obvious a set-up as I've ever encountered. It's a goddamn embarrassment. Especially with this asshole running around using a .44 just like yours."

"It isn't just like mine."

"What do you mean, it's a .44 Magnum, isn't it?"

"That's right. But it isn't *like* mine. It is mine." Harry figured he might as well admit it, because once the lab tests were run, they'd know soon enough in any case. "It was stolen from me last night while I was asleep."

"Shit."

"That was what I said exactly."

"You're certain it's your gun?"

"Pretty certain, yes. You run a ballistics check, but I'm sure it'll match up."

"Christ."

"He's not going to intervene in this one I've got a feeling."

"What did I say about sarcasm from you? I could have you suspended."

"And you're not going to?"

"Fuck."

"I could agree with that."

Bressler wearied of pacing back and forth. He sat down. He stared dolefully at Harry. "Who is so clever that he could get hold of your gun while you're asleep and then go out and kill people you are known, publicly, to detest? Who hates you that much they'd do that?"

"Lots of people."

This gave Bressler pause. "Yes, I suppose that's true. Let me rephrase the question. Who the hell would have the ability to pull off a stunt like this?"

The truth was Harry had been attempting to determine this for several hours. As soon as he'd woken to discover his gun missing, he realized he, Sheila and her daughter could all have been killed as they slept. In spite of the air of indifference he affected for Bressler's sake, he was deeply concerned, even afraid. Afraid not just for himself, but also for the woman and child whose lives had, for better or worse, become entangled with his.

Yet he had no intention of displaying any sign of weakness or guilt to Bressler. Better to act impassive and see not whether the shit hit the fan, because that was preordained, but just how much shit there would be.

"Well?" Bressler was waiting for a reply. "Have you a candidate for our evil genius?"

“Did the lone survivor get a look at the man?”

“Nan Raphael? She saw an eye, a nose and a pair of lips in the crack of a door. The man was white, that’s about all we could get from her. She couldn’t so much as tell us the color of his hair.”

“There was one man who could’ve done something like this.”

“Yes?” Bressler’s voice clearly betrayed his expectation.

“But he’s dead.”

“That’s right.”

Harry was thinking of Gallant, his memory freshened by the murderer’s escape and subsequent demise just two nights before. Gallant had the stamina and creativity to engineer the massacre of eight people and get away with it. But, as he was a charred corpse in the morgue, he had an incontrovertible alibi.

“And there’s no one else you can think of?”

“No one,” Harry answered resignedly.

“That’s a problem.”

“Damn right that’s a problem.”

“I’ve given this some thought, Callahan, and though the temptation is mighty, I’ve decided not to place you on suspension. We’ve got some nut out there who has this hard-on for you. I’m gambling we can bust him before it gets out of hand. But I don’t want you near this thing, understand? This is not your case.”

“Who’ve you given it to?”

“Black and Towers.”

Harry didn’t think much of detectives Black and Towers, but he knew there was nothing he could say to change Bressler’s mind.

“You got something to keep me occupied?”

“I think I do, I think we got something right up your alley.”

The way he said this gave Harry the feeling he might want to start looking for another alley.

It wasn’t an assignment so much as a punishment, Harry decided once Bressler had briefed him. There were two jokers circulating about town, picking up women, apparently at random, then blindfolding them and taking them way out into the country somewhere for the amusement of themselves and their assorted friends. Once they were through with them, they’d abandon them on a roadside far from any habitation.

Generally, the women were found wandering along the shoulder of

the road, with glazed eyes and an unsteady step. They appeared to have been sedated and their accounts of what happened to them tended to be rambling and incoherent. Even after recuperating, they were generally unhelpful, either because they did not recall the experience they'd undergone with any clarity or because they preferred to say nothing. It seemed most of the victims had willingly accepted invitations to accompany these two men and they might have believed that it was their fault they'd gotten involved in the first place.

Homicide wouldn't have been called into this sordid business were it not for the fact that one of the women turned up dead. An autopsy showed that she had been raped repeatedly and that she'd suffered the tearing of vaginal tissue as a consequence. But what had killed her was all the seconal in her system. She'd probably been alive when she was deposited on Route 12, midway between Sebastapol and Santa Rosa, but she didn't stay that way for very long. A truck driver spotted her at two A.M., staggering half-naked, toward the highway divider. He'd stopped, hauled her into the cabin of his truck, and asked her where she lived. She did not comprehend the question. She stammered some sort of response, then toppled over. The truck driver assumed she'd fallen asleep. She'd fallen into something much deeper and more permanent than sleep.

No one in Homicide particularly wanted to deal with this assignment. It was the kind of tawdry mess that Vice usually handled. And with such a scarcity of clues, it was bound to be a frustrating undertaking. Which was why Harry considered it a punishment, Bressler's way of getting back at him for losing his gun—which was now state's evidence.

What was he supposed to do, drive around town, waiting until he stumbled upon two men coaxing an innocent young thing into the car with them? The problem was there wasn't any law against picking up a single girl, no matter how naive she might be.

His only recourse seemed to be to interview the women that had gone through the ordeal and see if they remembered some telling details that had escaped them the first time they were questioned.

He decided to start with Marietta Hamalian who, according to the original case officer, was the most reliable witness of the half dozen women known to have been kidnapped by the mysterious pair.

Harry found her waitressing in a bar not far from the celebrated corner of Haight and Ashbury. The bar once catered to hippies who dwelled in the area, but lately it had switched its clientele to the Perrier and quiche crowd. Its windows harbored a great many tropical looking plants.

Marietta was a petite, washed-out woman of about twenty-five. She had a booming voice that was surprising coming from someone so tiny. It was a voice that could be heard over the clatter of dishes and pans in the kitchen in back. There was a smell of spilled beer and grease in the air.

Marietta did not appreciate having to speak to Harry. Especially she did not appreciate talking about an incident she obviously preferred keeping in the back of her mind.

"I told that other guy . . ."

"Officer Cox?"

"Cox, right. I told him all I could remember. What are you coming around with this shit again for?"

Harry knew better than to argue with her. Calmly, he told her it was possible she might have thought of something she'd forgotten to mention the first time. "What might seem trivial to you might turn out to be important to us.

The girl didn't look convinced.

"Now, what do you recall about these two guys who picked you up?"

"Just what I told Cox. Nothing special, you know. Two guys, not bad-looking, not great, but not bad-looking. One's white, about six feet tall, the other's black, a little taller. I thought, you know, what the hell? They're just a couple of guys in their twenties tooling around in a pink MG looking for fun. They had a great sense of humor, you know, and when they wanted to they could really turn on the charm."

Some sense of humor, Harry was thinking.

"And where did you meet them?"

"I told Cox," she protested again. "At the Annex."

The Annex on Fillmore was a well-known singles bar, and investigators had gone there and made inquiries, but they didn't get anywhere. Whoever these two men were, they made a point to keep moving. There was no instance of their returning to the same place twice.

"And they said they had a country place, is that it?"

"That's right. They said there was a party going and would I like to come? How did I know what kind of party it was going to be?"

She gazed at Harry with defiance as if to say that her actions needed no excuse.

"All right. You said that it was a house, but that they took you underground? A cellar was it?"

“No, not a cellar. I told Cox it wasn’t any cellar. It was like one of those things Hitler had, the one he offed himself in . . .”

“A bunker you mean?”

“That’s right, a bunker.”

Now that was interesting. She’d not said anything about a bunker-like structure in the initial questioning. “How did you recognize it was a bunker?”

“Hell, I don’t know. It had these big heavy metal doors, and you wouldn’t find them in any cellar, would you? And there were huge crates and barrels and shelves and shelves of canned goods. You had to go deep down to get to it.”

“How many feet would you say?”

“Jesus, I don’t know. All I know is that we had to walk down two or three sets of stairs.”

“Deep as going down to a BART station, would you say?”

“Yeah, maybe, it was as deep as the subway. Maybe.”

“Could it have been a fallout shelter?”

“A what?”

“A place you’d go when they start dropping the bombs on you?”

This seemed to puzzle her. She shook her head. “I’ve never seen a fallout shelter so big,” she said.

“Have you seen many fallout shelters?”

She admitted she hadn’t.

“Were the walls soundproofed? I mean could you hear anything from the outside?”

She shook her head again.

“And what about when you were going into the shelter—we’ll call it a shelter, if you don’t mind—did you hear any noises then? Or coming out?”

“It was in the woods, you know, I could smell pines. You could hear birds.” She paused, adding, “And then, just for a minute when I was leaving, I thought I heard gunshots.”

“Gunshots?”

“Yeah, I remember, I thought, ‘Shit, they execute people here, and they’re going to kill me.’ But one of the men said they were only practicing, and not to worry.”

“Practicing?”

“Yeah, practicing.”

"Thank you, Miss Hamalian, you've been a great help."

"That's it?"

"That's it for now."

* * *

There'd been nothing about the gunshots either in the report he'd been given. He began making a series of calls both to neighboring police forces and to the National Rifle Association in an effort to discover the location of practice ranges in the area.

Once he had a list, he perforated a map of the Bay region with a handful of colored pins. He selected those that he considered most likely, and got into his car, and went visiting.

But most of the practice ranges were located no where near a house to which a lavish underground shelter was attached. After three days it began to get rather discouraging. Besides his ears were ringing constantly from protracted exposure to dozens of .22's and .38's discharging simultaneously.

So he decided to travel another route and put in calls to building contractors in the northern part of the state who handled underground shelters.

A contractor by the name of Samuel Keating, of S.T.V. Builders, Inc., said he had installed an elaborate shelter north of Santa Rosa about five years previously.

"What was the terrain like, do you recall?"

Keating sounded like a man who prided himself on not forgetting anything. "Woods, lots of woods."

"Could you tell me where exactly you built this, and who hired you?"

"No problem. Hang on." He returned in a couple of minutes with the information. He gave Harry the address and said that the client's name was the Saving Remnant.

"Saving what?"

"Saving Remnant, that's the name of the client. It's some sort of fanatic organization, to be personally frank with you. What they call a survivalist group. You know, the type of people who believe the world's coming to an end, but that they're going to hang in there. But, look, it's good money, this end of the world business."

"You wouldn't know the name of the man who runs Saving Remnant, do you?"

"Not really, but I think they publish a newsletter or something,

same name as the organization. The man you want would be the editor."

Harry was about to hang up when Keating posed a question, "You don't think it is, by the way, do you?"

"Don't think what is?"

"The world coming to an end?"

"Not a chance," Harry assured him.

"Good. That's just what I thought," said Keating.

The newsletter Keating referred to was not widely available. Its circulation was restricted to true-believers evidently, but even true-believers discard their clutter from time to time. Harry dug up a copy of *The Saving Remnant* in a second-hand bookstore on Columbus.

The Saving Remnant was filled with dire predictions about the future of America. The Communists were on the verge of taking over Washington, they already controlled New York, Chicago, and Detroit. Why would the Communists want those places? Harry wondered. Gold, titanium, platinum, silver, Impressionist (but not modern) paintings, and antiquities of all kinds were worth getting hold of and cacheing away, according to the authors of the inflammatory journal, but there was no sense collecting anything unless one had a safe place in which to put it and yourself. Gold, as the newsletter so adroitly pointed out, was of little use to one when one was fried to a cinder in a nuclear attack.

Although the newsletter gave only a post office box as its mailing address, there was no attempt to conceal the editor's name; it was spelled out forthrightly on the masthead: Grant Turner.

To his surprise, Harry found a Grant Turner in the telephone book. It said he lived on Jackson Street. Harry decided to pay Mr. Turner a call and see whether the Grant Turner of Jackson Street was also the editor of this scurrilous newsletter.

A Chinese matron of indeterminate age lived downstairs from Grant Turner. She informed Harry that Turner was rarely around, he had a place "somewhere in the country" he usually went to, and it made no sense to wait around for him to reappear.

So Harry went for a ride, heading north by 101 into Sonoma County. He was armed with the address Keating had given him and with something else that he expected to find equally useful: a gleaming new .44 Magnum. This time he was not about to let it fall into the hands of a psychopath.

Keating had told him the land he'd installed the shelter on was

located off the beaten path, but he hadn't indicated just how far. Harry drove along a narrow twisted road that tended to peter out at intervals into mudbanked flats. There was no sign hereabouts to say one was getting close to anything. But tire tracks showed up clearly enough.

Off to his left, he spied the wreck of a car. Rust was gaining on it. It looked like it had been sitting there, on the very edge of the road, such as it was, for a good long time. Harry didn't realize the presence of the rusting hulk had a special meaning.

The meaning, however, became clear within a moment.

There was a loud explosion. The clear surface of Harry's windshield clouded over in a myriad of cracks. In the middle of the cracks, a perfect hole had been formed. The bullet had entered on Harry's side, but ended up in the cushioned seat behind him, because it had quite obviously failed to hit him.

He swerved the car to the left as a second shot was fired. The sniper had evidently not anticipated the sudden motion of the car and the bullet impacted in the door on the passenger side, with a loud metallic clang.

Harry concluded that outsiders were not especially welcome, and that continuing on the way he was might reasonably be considered suicidal. So without troubling himself to turn around, he began backing up as fast as he could. There were no additional shots.

As he neared the end of the road, close to where it joined the main highway, he glimpsed two men in hardhats, with 30-30's cradled in their arms, standing directly in his path. When they raised their weapons, there was no mistaking the seriousness of their intent.

He decided, all things considered, he'd stop and see what these men wanted. He took the precaution of removing his .44 from its holster, though he made sure to keep it out of sight.

Only one of the men approached him. The other stood back, regarding him warily, still holding his 30-30 on him.

The man who desired to speak with him, rapped on the window for Harry to roll it down.

"What can I do for you?" he asked in a voice that sounded downright neighborly. "You looking for someone in these parts?"

Harry smiled brightly at him. "Just happened to be taking a drive and got myself lost is all."

The skeptical expression on the man's face indicated he was having trouble believing him. "You had to go out of your way to get lost, seems to me. This here is private property. You should've paid

attention to the sign."

"What sign? I didn't see any sign."

The man considered the possibility of this. "Mmmmmm, well, sometimes a big storm like we got last night comes along and blows it down. But that's no excuse."

"Absolutely right. I beg your pardon."

Though he wasn't satisfied with Harry's apology, he saw no point in pursuing the subject. "All right, then, you just follow the road, and you'll get to the turn-off."

Harry thanked him. The man stood there for several seconds, watching Harry with unmitigated suspicion.

Harry did as he was told. He started back toward San Francisco, heading south on 12. It was growing late in the day and the western sun had turned the road a blazing orange.

Approximately twenty minutes after leaving the homestead of Saving Remnant, he happened to notice a car speeding in the other direction. It went by very fast and with the light so intense it was difficult to see, but there was something about this car that gave Harry pause. He kept driving on, trying to figure out what it was.

Then it came to him. Right away he did a U-turn, startling the other drivers in the vicinity, and raced back the way he'd come. He was certain that the other car had been a pink MG and that it was occupied by three people—a man and a woman up in front, and another man in back. He could be sure of nothing else. The car had been going too quickly for him to make out whether one of the men was white and the other black. But how many pink MG's could there be, especially on a road which led to the same destination all the previous kidnap victims might have taken?

Of course, he couldn't retrace his route if he wanted to avoid getting blasted out of existence. Well, he thought, I'll just have to find another way in. That didn't necessarily guarantee him freedom from being blasted out of existence though, in fact, it didn't guarantee him anything but a long hike.

CHAPTER

Seven

The doctor, whose name was Jonas Pine, said he'd once done time himself. Gallant asked him what his crime had been. Said Dr. Pine, "I performed a hysterectomy without a proper license."

"I see," Gallant muttered. "And what happened to the patient?"

Dr. Pine didn't say, but from the expression on his face, Gallant had a feeling he knew. It did not make him any more reassured about having this man alter his features, but Turner recommended him, and so what was he to do?

Dr. Pine began to sketch what he had in mind on a crumpled piece of paper. He depicted a bearded man with eyes that glowed with strange intensity. It didn't look anything like Gallant, which was, he supposed, the point.

"It won't require much surgery. There isn't time, you see, to do anything major. Turner wants you ready in a few weeks. Otherwise, I could have reconstructed you entirely."

For this, at least, Gallant was grateful.

"But you'll make it so no one will recognize me?"

"Oh yes. And you will grow a beard, a very lush one I hope, and that will help. And I intend to do a slight bit of work on your vocal cords."

"Now wait a minute . . ." The last thing he wanted was this quack sticking a knife down his throat.

"Don't worry, it'll be a quick and relatively minor procedure. All it'll do will be to make your voice sound somewhat hoarser. It's just as important no one identify your voice as it is your face. Am I correct?"

They were seated in an office in Turner's house. The window looked out on the front lawn which in turn gave way to a densely wooded area. In back, several hundred yards away, was the rifle range, and slightly to the left was Turner's palatial shelter connected to the house by a subterranean tunnel. It was some set-up, and it was all financed by proceeds from people who contributed thousands of dollars yearly to the Saving Remnant. Turner, Gallant thought, had come a long ways from heisting trucks full of meat.

With a squeal of tires and flurry of exhaust smoke, a pink MG pulled up in front of the house and stopped. The doors flew open and the three passengers got out. One was a vapid looking blond. Gallant regarded the doctor questioningly.

"Oh, that's Dan and Sandy. Dan's the dark one . . . he's Samoan."

"And who's the girl?"

The doctor smiled mischievously. "Well, we'll just have to find out, won't we?"

Looking again, Gallant saw she was blindfolded. But far from protesting her enforced sightlessness, she was laughing, and each time she stumbled, she laughed harder. It was all a game to her apparently.

"You see," the doctor explained, "Dan and Sandy like their fun. No one minds because they are always eager to share what they bring home."

"How do the girls feel about this?"

"They don't generally mind." Here the doctor opened up his medical bag, a black leather affair, disclosing a vast sampling of pharmaceutical products. "Valium, seconal, quaaludes, amphetimines, you name it. As a rule, they are quite cooperative actually. Or else they're too numb to care one way or the other."

"And how does Grant regard this?" Somehow, the idea of weekly orgies didn't exactly square with the purported objectives of the Saving Remnant.

Dr. Pine shrugged. "So long as it causes no dissension in the ranks, and it's done discreetly, he doesn't mind. However, he never participates. Dan and Sandy try to restrict themselves to times when Turner's not here. Like now."

"I see," said Gallant who really didn't see at all.

"You are invited to join in, if you'd care to."

"I'm not sure I'm quite up to it . . ." And it was true. The night he'd spent on his murderous spree had left him so exhausted he didn't know whether he could perform in front of a cheering section composed of soldiers of the Saving Remnant.

"Well, clearly, my attendance is necessary," said the good doctor, snapping shut his case. "Come down to the bunker. It's always fun to watch even if you don't choose to participate."

This was an offer that Gallant saw no reason to refuse. So he trailed after Dr. Pine, following through the tunnel. When they emerged, the sound of the girl's laughter greeted them.

She was already intoxicated, on alcohol, and probably on grass and

coke, and Gallant wondered whether she needed the additional drugs Dr. Pine was prepared to give her.

"Hi," she said, taking Gallant's hand, "I'm Sugar."

"I bet you are."

This caused her to erupt in another fit of giggles.

The man the doctor had identified as Sandy was leaning down to surround Sugar's waist with his arms. Dan in the meantime was lifting her halter top away from her breasts and peering down. "What a beautiful view!" he kept saying. "What a beautiful view!"

Sugar giggled some more, saying, "Oh, what are you looking at? There's nothing to look at."

The doctor held out a pill of some kind. "Be a good girl and open up," he said. "Very good. Now stick your tongue out."

"Wha's tha?" she asked.

"Something fun."

Her face lit up in expectation. She took the pill willingly and swallowed it with the help of some straight brandy.

Parking his car way off to the side of the road, Harry began the trek through the woods, no easy trick with so much brush to contend with. The land was uneven and rocky and broken, and at regular intervals, he was compelled to ford streams whose currents were strong enough to unbalance a man. And as he proceeded farther, the consistency of the earth changed, becoming softer, murky, like a bog that threatened to suck one right in.

At last he was rewarded. In the distance, he could make out, between two gnarled and lightning-struck trees, a blur of white stone. As he approached, the whiteness defined itself. This must be the house where the Saving Remnant was waiting for the world to collapse. To the side, he discerned a large gray cement slab lying flat in the middle of a bed of grass. This would be the top of the shelter, he guessed.

The problem was that he was paying too much attention to these two structures and not enough to what was happening behind him.

"You there, turn around or I'll blow your ass off."

Harry knew the voice. It belonged to the man in the hardhat who'd accosted him at the beginning of the road.

Harry slowly turned.

"Hands up!"

Harry complied with the order.

“You again,” said the man in the hardhat. He sounded genuinely disgusted.

“That’s right.”

This time the man was alone. It was possible his companion was laying low not far away, but Harry doubted it.

“Who are you?”

“Traveling salesman.”

“What if I said I don’t believe you.” He kept the 30-30 leveled toward Harry, and step by step, he bridged the distance that separated the two of them.

“I’d say then you have a problem.”

The sentry glared at Harry and reached with his free hand into Harry’s jacket. Seeing the bulge in it, he appeared to know where the gun was concealed.

But he was so intent on taking the gun away from Harry, he failed to see him jerk up his knee. All at once, he registered a savage pain in his groin and he nearly blacked out. He managed to release a protracted scream which caused the birds in the vicinity to flutter in panic up toward the sky.

Harry struck him a second time with the edge of his hand, catching him on his neck. The blow stunned the man. His knees buckled and he slumped to the ground. He barely hung on to his rifle, though it was obvious he couldn’t make use of it.

Harry took hold of his .44 and brought it squarely down on the hardhat. There was a shrill ringing in response. The top of the hat was partially crushed. There was no telling what sort of damage had been done to the head underneath, but there could be no doubt of the effect. The man lay prostrate, his consciousness obliterated by the impact.

Racing forward, Harry came into the open. Several cars and a couple of vans were parked in front of the house. Among them was the pink MG he’d spotted earlier.

Although the light was not entirely out of the western sky, the tall sycamores and pines diminished it so it was difficult to see too far in the distance.

Lights were on in the house. Harry circled around until he found a door. It was locked. The Saving Remnant wouldn’t be expected to ignore routine security, Harry supposed. Legally, of course, he was on dangerous ground. To burst in without a warrant, was sufficient cause to have any possible case thrown out of court. It might well jeopardize his already precarious position in the department still further.

On the other hand, if his suspicions were correct, there was a girl inside this complex who was being expertly drugged, and more expertly raped. Harry shot out the lock.

Though he expected the detonation would have alerted the inhabitants of the house, he found he'd provoked no reaction whatsoever. The hallway he entered was empty, as were the rooms he proceeded through. The party obviously was taking place somewhere else.

As soon as one brings a pretty girl into the situation, even a dumb pretty girl, Harry thought, one's security goes all to hell.

It stood to reason there'd be an underground connection between this house and the shelter. You never know, they might drop the bomb in the middle of the night, thought Harry. Turner would want to be able to scramble out of bed and down to his underground digs without exposing himself to a miliaria of radioactivity. But the house, now that he was inside it, was larger than he'd imagined. It required several minutes before he discovered the door leading to the tunnel that would take him to the shelter.

He moved stealthily. Surely, he believed, somebody would be standing guard even if it meant missing the entertainment. But he got all the way to the end of the tunnel without seeing anybody. A door faced him. At its base was an electrified mat and as soon as Harry placed a foot on it the door automatically drew open. But as it did so it set off a loud buzzer and a red light overhead that blinked frantically to register the new arrival.

"Must be Turner," he heard someone say.

He heard someone else correct him.

A round smashed into the cinderblock wall behind him. He dropped to the cement floor. It was very cold down there. A second round sped over his head and into the metal door he'd just come through. When it closed, the buzzer and the blinking light had both shut off. Not that it mattered, they'd already done their mischief.

Harry stayed where he was for several moments, listening to the commotion that his intrusion provoked. Men were shouting orders at each other. Harry had the feeling no one quite knew how to handle the situation in the absence of their commander.

Harry plunged ahead, capitalizing on the lack of organized opposition. He suddenly found himself in a room unlike any he'd ever seen outside of a museum. Though there, there wouldn't have been so much clutter. There were antiques of all kinds surrounding him: silver sauce tureens, Heeplewhite dining chairs, Queen Anne side chairs, cherrywood reverse-serpentine chests, Chippendale walnut clocks,

Sheffield tea urns, Regency walnut bombe commodes, silver julep cups and wastebowls dating back to the Eighteenth Century, Delft vases and plates and Chinese Trade porcelain tea sets, and even a portrait of a Miss Tillie Mead, painted in 1831. Smack in the middle of these collectibles was a canopied bed on which lay a nude woman, her legs spread wide apart. Her thighs were pummeled bright red and the tips of her breasts were moist with saliva. Her eyes were heavily lidded—it seemed she could barely keep them open—and her lips were parted. She was mumbling something Harry could not hear. There was no indication she was aware of Harry's presence until suddenly she raised her head slightly and said in a soft hoarse voice, "Hi, I'm Sugar, what's your name?" before lapsing back into unconsciousness.

There was no sign of her attackers. Harry could still hear them though. They were hastening away, presumably toward another exit farther into the shelter.

Ignoring the lavish display of antiques, memorabilia, and paintings that were exhibited in every one of the several rooms that constituted this strange shelter, Harry forged ahead, determined to apprehend at least a couple of these fuckers for his trouble.

Not all of them had fled. An elegant vase burst just to his right and he threw himself to the floor once again. Although he couldn't spot his assailant, he was able to get a fair idea of his location by looking into an ornate gilt-framed mirror that hung on the opposite wall.

There, in the unusually dark surface of the glass, he could distinguish the reflection of a man's shoulders. Harry had only to make a few simple calculations to pinpoint his position behind an Eighteenth Century Dutch crib which resembled an armoire. Harry sighted his Magnum on the crib and fired. Between the crib's front and back wall there was nothing but space. The bullet easily penetrated both, scattering a multitude of expensive mahogany fragments, some of which struck the man using the crib as a cover. He cried out with pain and involuntarily shifted his stance. Harry now held a better view of him in the mirror. He saw the man had let down his guard to inspect the cuts he'd sustained and to pluck out a couple of splinters from his arms and neck.

Harry rushed forward before the man had the opportunity to prepare for him. While he managed to retrieve his gun, the shot he fired went awry, smashing a Delft plate and something crystal. Harry lurched to the left to avoid the fire and let off a single shot. The man was lifted off his feet and crashed into the already bullet-riddled crib, demolishing it entirely. It wasn't the .44 that gave him his fatal wound but a long razor-sharp splinter of wood on which he was impaled. When Harry approached him, he saw the splinter had pierced his

bowels at such an angle that it had driven out his stomach just below the sternum. He wasn't quite dead, but in writhing about in a futile attempt to extricate the wood, he quickly died.

Harry saw as he continued through the rooms, that clothes were strewn about the floor. By interrupting the orgy, he hadn't allowed its participants time to get themselves altogether dressed again.

He reconnoitered the remaining rooms, coming at last to the exit; the door was still swinging open, attesting to the speed with which the rapists had fled. Harry could hear the sound of motors revving up. Mounting a series of stairs that led back to ground level, he saw he was only a short distance from the parking lot.

The first car he looked for was the pink MG. It was hard to miss even in the dark. Already it was starting its bumpy way in the direction of the rutted road that would take its passengers to safety.

Though his energy was flagging, Harry drove himself as hard as he could, until he was within range of the MG. He fired first at the front left tire, then at the back one. For a moment, he wondered whether he'd succeeded in puncturing either. He was rewarded with a satisfying bang as the tires exploded, an event followed immediately by the car listing sharply to the right. By momentum alone, it kept bouncing ahead, but it must have been as clear to the driver as it was to Harry it was not going to get far.

With the MG crippled, Harry had little difficulty in catching up to it. Then, ignoring the brambles, he skirted the edge of the woods, along the road until he could get in front of the slowly advancing vehicle. It looked rather ridiculous as it lurched noisily ahead, like a drunk staggering down the street.

Shielding his eyes with his free hand from the glare of the headlights, he took up a position in the road and sighted his .44 directly on the driver. Should the driver be so foolish as to try to run him down—not an easy thing to accomplish with a car he could barely control—Harry could easily leap back off the road.

But the driver realized the odds were very much against him. The MG shuddered to a halt.

"Out of there," Harry called.

The driver, who had a mop of tossled blond hair and the air of a slightly dissolute beach-boy, promptly complied with the order. Not so his passenger, who while not black, was very swarthy.

He lingered a few seconds too long for Harry's liking. When he finally did get out of the car, he held his hands in back of him. Harry knew he had a gun. A blink of the eye, and he might have missed it. It was possible he may have fired even before the man brought it into

view.

In any case, while his friend watched in horror, the man was hit and went down instantly, shrieking in agony. A bloody hand grasped hold of the front left wheel fender as though he meant to raise himself upright, but the effort failed. He collapsed, blood pouring from his chest into the ruts of the road. He struggled against death, but death wanted him now, and took him.

"You killed Dan, you killed Dan," the man said over and over again, incredulity in his voice. He stooped down to examine the body, but there was no question that Dan had expired.

Just then another car came into sight. Its headlights put the pink MG, its terrified driver and its dead passenger, into a brutal relief.

The driver of this second car stopped suddenly when he saw what lay up ahead. Harry heard voices, then the slam of car doors. Evidently, whoever the occupants of this car were, they'd decided on making a run for it. Harry spotted two figures clambering up an embankment as they sought to lose themselves in the woods.

Harry could see clearly because the men had neglected to kill their car lights. As a result, the high-intensity beams kept a wide swath of land and roadbed wonderfully illuminated. Aiming his Magnum at a cluster of pines toward which the pair was headed, he called out for them to halt.

One did, the other hesitated, then broke into a run. Harry fired at the man's feet, spewing rocks and earth.

"Over here, assholes, slowly, with your arms up."

They came, with baleful expressions and a mournful step, till they were within a couple of yards of Harry. In the meantime the blond was so overcome by his friend's death he was incapable of any action whatsoever.

"Give me your names."

The blond identified himself as Sandy Lyman. The old distinguished looking fellow said he was Doctor Jonas Pine. He placed a great deal of emphasis on the word doctor. Moreover, he sounded deeply affronted he had been placed in such a humiliating predicament. Harry wasn't interested. He turned to the man who'd been with the doctor, the one who'd seemed so anxious to escape.

"And who might you be?"

The man had his face half-averted from Harry.

Harry said, "Look at me and tell me your name." He was tired and growing impatient. He wondered how he was going to keep these three prisoners from getting away while simultaneously tending to the

traumatized woman still in the shelter.

The man muttered something.

“I don’t have all day, asshole, what is your name?”

“Andrew Dardis.”

Harry proceeded to handcuff the man who called himself Dardis, sensing he was the most dangerous. He then herded the three into his car and called in on his radio for help.

But as he sat in the car, waiting, Sugar materialized from the shelter, still disoriented and naked, moving from side to side, and occasionally tripping as she made her way in their direction.

“Will you look at that!” said Sandy, momentarily distracted by this astonishing sight. “She is fucking out of it, man.”

That was an understatement. He motioned to her, but there was no indication that she was aware of anything outside her own bewildered mind.

The doctor was shaking his head and saying, “What she needs is a controlled environment.”

Dardis wasn’t talking at all. He didn’t even appear interested in Sugar or her nakedness. A more melancholy man Harry had never seen.

If he went out to help the woman, he risked losing his prisoners. As Sugar seemed completely unresponsive, there was no question somebody would have to assist her. She might very well wander into the woods and hurt herself. Harry didn’t want to lose Sugar. She was his star witness, after all. Actually, she was the only witness.

To Dr. Jonas Pine he said, “Go out there and bring her in. I am going to keep a careful eye on you so don’t get any notions of skipping out on me. Is that understood?”

The doctor straightened himself, and said, with as much dignity as he could muster, that such an idea would never enter his mind. “My chief concern has always been my patients,” he declared.

CHAPTER

Eight

When Harry left Santa Rosa, it was with the sense that something positive had been accomplished. Sugar was being treated in the ER of the local hospital. Three of the men who'd drugged and raped her were waiting to be booked in a holding cell.

Three hours after returning to San Francisco, Harry was back at his office in the Justice Building. It was late at night, and there were few people about. For some reason, the damn phone kept ringing.

Hoping to finish some obligatory paperwork, the constant interruptions had him greatly irritated. In any case, usually the caller wanted to speak to someone else.

But the fifth call was somewhat more important.

"This is Brevoort," the man on the other end said.

"Brevoort?" Then he remembered. He was the county sheriff who'd taken custody of the suspects. "Oh yes, what can I do for you?"

"I am afraid I have some news you're not going to like."

Harry's heart sank. He had a feeling he knew what was coming.

"You're not unique in that respect," he said. "Tell me."

"The D.A. got here around an hour ago and after consulting with the Superior Court Judge, felt he had no choice but to release the three suspects you brought in."

"What the hell?"

"There were certain problems, you see," Brevoort said, trying to sound sympathetic.

"Problems?"

"Well, the absence of a warrant for one thing and the fact that we had no proof linking any of the three to the alleged molestation and rape of this woman, what's her name?—ah, yes, Lucille Finehurst, nicknamed Sugar."

Harry struggled to restrain himself from cursing out the son of a bitch. "A warrant has nothing to do with this. I was stopping a crime in progress . . ."

"Yes, I am sure you were. But unfortunately, we have no

corroboration of that."

"No corroboration? And what about Miss Lucille Finehurst, nicknamed Sugar? There's your fucking cooperation!"

Brevoort hesitated for a moment. "That, I am afraid, is another problem. Your Sugar, soon as she recovered consciousness, took a walk. Said there was nothing the matter with her and split A.M.F."

"A.M.F?"

"Adios motherfucker, an expression I understand some doctors use when a patient leaves without their authorization. There was nothing they could do to prevent her from leaving."

"You could have kept her there, she's a principal witness. She's the fucking victim, for Chrissakes . . ."

"Please, Inspector Callahan, I know how difficult this must be for you, but really there was nothing we could do. It seems Sugar, Miss Finehurst, declined to press charges. Says she went on her own volition and the whole thing's her fault. She says that, what can we do? So the D.A. determined there was really no case, and it would only be a waste of the county's money to seek an indictment."

Harry didn't care to listen to any more. He hung up without letting Brevoort say goodbye.

But there was more to come. The following morning another officer attached to the Santa Rosa police force left a message for Harry to call him. The note said that it was urgent.

Urgent or not, Harry was not permitted the opportunity to phone him. An emergency call had just been received by the dispatcher to the effect that a gunman was stalking the exclusive Golden Gateway apartment complex. The description of the suspect came close to matching the man Harry had arrested the night before—Sandy Lyman.

Harry couldn't believe Sandy would be so stupid as to risk a second confrontation with the police just hours after being released from jail on a technicality. But it was possible Sandy was acting from desperation, impelled to madness by the slaying of his good buddy, the Samoan.

Maybe it was just chance, maybe it was fate, but when Harry arrived at the Golden Gateway complex, he found the same trio of officers that had greeted him on Pier 43½.

"What we've got here, Inspector, is a lot of confusion," one of them said.

“That has a familiar ring to it. Could you do a bit better than that?”

“A woman name of Kaye Sissler lives up there, you see, where that window is?” He pointed to one of the apartments visible from the mall where they were standing. Behind them, a crowd was assembling, peering up at the same wide picture window, hoping to get a glimpse of the drama taking place. The only problem was there was nothing to see. The beige curtains were parted to allow a look into the room, but there was no one to be seen in the room. Several people in the crowd were debating what had happened. While everyone had their definite opinions, the fact was that no one knew for sure, and that included the police.

“Is she still in the apartment?” Harry asked.

“No, before anyone could stop him, some guy seizes her and hauls ass out of there. We’ve got men scouring the whole complex searching for them, but so far no luck. They could be anywhere.”

“Thanks, you’ve been a great help.”

Where in this maze of townhouses, restaurants, shops, and offices was the most likely place for a kidnapper to drag his victim? In his deranged state, Sandy, if Sandy it was, might not give a damn. But Harry had a feeling he would choose a part of the complex through which a great many people circulated. Rather than display his gun openly, he might prefer to keep it hidden, but still trained on the woman. Naturally, she would do as he instructed, pretend to be a friend, maybe a lover.

Harry decided to let the other officers carry out their hunt in the nooks and crannies of the Golden Gateway complex. He, on the other hand, crossed a pedestrian bridge and made his way through the throngs of morning shoppers. He had a good memory for people’s faces and the capacity for rapidly scanning a large number of them at one time.

Even a short distance away from the site of the Sissler apartment, no one seemed aware of the kidnapping and the atmosphere was one of complete normalcy. By plunging through the crowd with so little regard for those he jostled, he caused something of a stir. A few of those who got in his way shouted curses after him.

Harry mumbled his apologies, not that it did any good, and kept going, staring into faces like a madman, always looking for a mop of blond hair, but never failing to ignore those who wore hats or caps that might serve to cover over their hair.

It appeared to be a futile endeavor. It was possible the suspect and his captive had already left the premises and were well on their way out of the city, though presumably not in a pink MG.

Nonetheless, he kept on looking until his eyes began to throb. He thought he would soon start hallucinating. More than once, he believed he had Sandy in view, but it always turned out to be some other man with a woman who did not in the least resemble a kidnap victim.

He was about to give up when he casually glanced behind him and saw a man in a checkered short-sleeved shirt accompanied by a dark-haired rather pretty woman. The man had blond hair though he wore a visored cap angled sharply down over his brow. He maintained a firm grip on the woman, his arm circling her waist. His eyes darted from side to side in anticipation of impending danger. He was speaking to the woman whose face was pale and drawn. No wonder, an experience like this, Harry thought, could age one years in a matter of hours. He could see she was trembling, that while she was valiantly straggling to maintain her composure, the effort was exhausting her. It looked entirely possible she'd simply collapse in a faint.

Sandy—for Harry was certain now that it was the man he'd arrested the night before—had not yet spotted him. He was no doubt looking for uniformed police officers, not those in plain clothes.

Harry noted he was holding his jacket slung over his arm, and he guessed this was where his gun was, within easy access, and pointed right on the woman. He was guiding her down a set of stairs and onto a plaza that was filling with more and more shoppers. To risk a shootout here might well endanger a great many innocent people. Sandy, being as desperate as he was, would very likely show no hesitation about sacrificing other lives if he believed he was likely to forfeit his too.

All at once Sandy saw him. He paused for a fraction of a second, uncertain what he should do next. He wheeled about, forcing the woman to do the same, and began climbing back upstairs, brushing aside anyone who happened to be in his way.

Harry pursued them. He managed to close the distance between them with little difficulty. The woman with Sandy couldn't run as quickly as he wanted her to. She stumbled at one point, a black pump went flying off her left foot. She might very well have twisted her ankle for she shrieked with sudden pain, causing those around her to ask her if she were all right. Sandy meanwhile hadn't the leisure to be solicitous and he started to drag her, heedless of her missing footwear and injured ankle.

There were too many people in the way and still no one knew what was happening. In any case there wasn't all that much space on this walkway to maneuver. Harry called out to Sandy, addressing him by name, demanding he surrender.

Instead, he did what Harry feared he would. Tossing away the jacket dangling off his arm, he brandished his weapon and pressed it close to the woman's breast. Those in the vicinity screamed and tried to back off.

Harry had his .44 out, but it didn't seem it would be of any use to him.

"I'll kill her, I swear I'll kill her if you don't put that down and get out of here!" Sandy shouted, his voice hoarse and venemous.

Just then, before Harry had a chance to react, there was a loud blast. Blood coursed over the front of Sandy's checkered short-sleeved shirt and he pitched over the railing of the walkway and plummeted to the mall below. The woman was shaken but unhurt.

Predictably, the chaos that ensued in the wake of the killing made it impossible for Harry to determine who had shot Sandy. Wherever he looked, people were scrambling for shelter, understandably convinced further shots would follow though none did. There was a great uproar. Some were screaming in panic, others from horror, others from plain fear. But collectively, in this public atrium, their screams made it seem as though the Golden Gateway complex had become the temporary home of a tribe of aborigines conducting strange nocturnal rites.

By the time the uniformed officers arrived on the scene and began their investigation, no less than twenty possible witnesses were prepared to say what they'd seen. And virtually all of them declared that while they might not be aware of the context of the situation they had no doubt that Harry had been the one to fire on the kidnapper.

Harry thought it of little significance that he was believed to be Sandy's killer. When, later that day, Bressler called him in to discuss this latest incident, Harry pointed out that his gun had not been discharged and he was certain the ballistics tests would bear him out. Not that he felt any remorse over Sandy's death, but he wanted it made emphatically clear that he would never risk opening fire when doing so would imperil the life of an innocent victim.

Bressler, however, was not so easily convinced. "We've already run a ballistics test," he said. "That's why I called you in here. Sandy Lyman was shot by a .44 Light."

Harry knew what was coming. But he protested that further ballistics tests would clearly show that it was not his .44 that had been responsible.

"I don't doubt you, Callahan. But that's not the point. It's common knowledge you busted Lyman yesterday and because you failed to take into account certain legal niceties, he was released only hours after you arrested him. Now he's dead. Just like Judge Gallagher,

Marc Torio, and Morris Page. And now add to the list Lyman. You know what kind of publicity we're bound to get? No matter what our tests finally show, you've got fifteen, twenty people out there willing to testify it was you who fired the gun. They may think you're a hero, they're undoubtedly as unreliable as most witnesses are, but imagine the field day the papers are going to have with it?"

Harry said nothing. Not much imagination was required.

Bressler said, "Whoever wants your ass, wants it bad. And it's damned embarrassing for the department. You're being depicted as some kind of freak, a mad vengeful cop taking the law into his own hands. The heat's getting to us all. I am afraid I'll have to suspend you pending the outcome of our investigation."

"What investigation?"

"The one the commissioner has just ordered. Things happen quickly around here, you've got to keep up."

Harry decided to ask how long this investigation might take. Bressler, as he'd suspected, said he had no idea. "We'll keep you posted."

"I never doubted it for a moment."

Harry had never seen such a look of satisfaction on the face of his superior. It was apparent he suffered no remorse over Harry's departure from the force, however temporary.

It was only when he got back to his desk to clean it out, that he remembered the message from Santa Rosa. Though it might no longer matter to him, curiosity led him to return the call.

He was put through to an Officer Carl Mansfield.

"How are you, Inspector?"

Harry admitted he'd been better.

"Oh yes, I heard about what happened last night. It's a fucking frustrating business. As a matter of fact, that's why I am calling you. We sent off the fingerprints of your three suspects to Washington. That was before we were told to release them."

"And?"

"The FBI ran them through their computer. We got nothing back on Sandy Lyman. Jonas Pine was a different story. He was once a licensed practitioner, but no longer. He was busted for a couple of felonies, nothing violent though, involved trafficking in drugs. He was fond of filling out false prescriptions. Not to mention conducting surgery in states where his license had either been revoked or never issued in the first place. Not the man you'd want to take out your appendix."

“Or your tonsils.”

“I don’t think it would surprise you if I told you he’s been hit with some major malpractice suits.”

“Not at all.”

“Of course, he always splits town before he can be hauled into court. But it isn’t Pine I wanted to talk to you about. It’s the third twerp you brought in here.”

“Andrew Dardis?”

“That’s what he called himself, that’s what his Social Security card said he was, but his fingerprints say differently. According to the FBI, Andrew Dardis is James William Gallant.”

“Gallant? It can’t be him. He’s dead.”

“Not anymore he isn’t,” said Carl Mansfield.

CHAPTER

Nine

Upon the receipt of this information regarding the death and astonishing rebirth of James William Gallant, a court order was obtained and the body of the man thought to be Gallant was exhumed.

There was very little of the body left. What hadn't been incinerated in the fire had been cut out, weighed, and analyzed by city coroners. No one had thought it necessary to take any fingerprints, moreover, fingerprinting would have been something of a problem since nearly all the fingers were either burned away or so charred that obtaining a clear impression was virtually impossible. Even so, two of the fingers belonging to the left hand were intact enough to undertake a microscopic analysis with some hope of success. It wasn't much to go on, but it was sufficient for the sake of comparison.

Early in the evening, some five days after his suspension, Harry was sitting gloomily at home when the phone rang. He grabbed at it like a drowning man would a life preserver.

"Harry? This is Walter White."

White worked in the lab, quarantined from the controversies that made life in other departments, like Homicide and Vice, the grueling business it was sometimes. He'd heard about Harry's suspension, he said he was sorry about it. But it was not something he wanted to talk about, not when the papers were speculating on the presence of a "mad vigilante cop" in the city's midst and calling on the commissioner and the mayor to rein in officers who took the law into their own hands. That the facts were at odds with what the press said then so much worse for the facts. Facts were not always what boosted circulation figures or accounted for high Arbitron ratings. Nonetheless, for White and for many of his colleagues, this affair with Harry was a terrible embarrassment This despite the fact that most of them would not have been unhappy should he suddenly vanish from the face of the earth. That would free them from the burden of having to consider his plight and adopt some kind of public position regarding it.

Harry understood White's predicament, he could hear the catch in his voice over the line. He sounded like someone calling to express his condolences over the death of a loved one.

"What can I do for you, Walter?"

"The results came back from the coroner's office and I thought you'd like to be informed of them."

At first, Harry wasn't sure to what he was referring, then remembered: the fingerprints.

"I'm listening."

"The two fingerprints we succeeded in taking from the corpse fail to match the corresponding fingerprints belonging to James Gallant. We checked both with the prints we have on file here and with those the FBI has. There's no question—whoever the stiff was, and we've been unable to ascertain its identity—it wasn't Gallant."

"I appreciate this, Walter."

"Any time." He hung up quickly, unwilling to risk a conversation of longer duration.

Harry had waited until now to notify Sheila that the man who had murdered her husband was not dead. He wanted to be absolutely sure beforehand. There was no sense in alarming her unnecessarily. But now there was good reason for alarm.

He had no doubt now as to who was running around town, killing people in his name thus setting him up. Nor was there a question as to who had stolen into Sheila's bedroom and made off with his .44. If he had been able to get that close to her and her daughter, Harry was sure he could again. Gallant was more than clever. He possessed a certain genius. Where others might use that genius to send a space shuttle to the moon or find a cure for multiple sclerosis, James William Gallant was devoting his genius to the destruction of Harry Callahan.

That Harry had him in his custody and been unaware of it and that he'd slipped away from him, was so damn infuriating he chose not to think about it. Why hadn't he recognized him? True, six years had gone by since he'd last laid eyes on him, and true, he was tired and preoccupied and it was dark, but none of these things excused him from himself.

Nonetheless, he knew now Gallant was somehow tied in with Turner and the Saving Remnant and that was a lead he promised himself he would follow up.

But first he had to tell Sheila. It had been several days since he'd last seen her. He was living like a monk, brooding over his suspension, his only communication with her had been by phone. Their phone conversations as always were hardly satisfactory. Lately, they had been reduced to inquiries after each other's health and well-being, and nothing more. Sheila wanted to help him, but Harry was not inclined to accept help from anyone, especially her.

He deliberated over calling her, but decided with news like this, the best thing to do was to tell her in person. It wouldn't be easy, but it had to be done.

First, though, he put in a call to Sergeant Reineke. He figured he could trust him enough to ask a small favor.

It took several minutes, but eventually Reineke was located. Like Walter White, he didn't sound as though he cherished the opportunity to speak to Harry.

"I want you to do something for me."

"I'll do my best, Harry."

"There's a man named Grant Turner, he edits a newsletter called *The Saving Remnant* which is also what he calls his organization. He owns land not far from Santa Rosa, just off Route 12. Whatever else you can dig up about the guy, I would surely appreciate."

"Grant Turner. Sounds familiar. OK, as soon as I have something, I'll be back to you."

Harry felt that he too was relieved to get off the phone.

Sheila and Louise were in the living room watching television when Harry arrived. Louise was dressed in her pajamas and it was obvious that her bedtime was rapidly approaching, an event heralded by much yawning.

As soon as Harry entered, the little girl screwed up her face and gave Harry a long curious stare. In the past, the two of them had gotten along famously, but now Louise acted strangely reticent. Shyly, she backed away when Harry approached her. It was as if he had been suddenly transformed into an ogre since she'd last seen him a week before.

"Say hello to Harry," her mother said with the same tone of voice she might otherwise use to urge her to eat her spinach.

No, Louise absolutely refused to say hello. She attempted a tentative smile, but that was as far as she would go.

Sheila sighed in exasperation. "All right, sweetheart, time for bed."

Louise shook her head defiantly.

But Sheila was determined. "Harry and your mother have to talk. Now say good night."

Louise proved no more eager to bid Harry a good night than she was to bid him hello. She scampered off to her bedroom, dragging a stuffed blue rabbit after her. Sheila followed her in, telling Harry she'd be back in a few minutes. "Make yourself a drink, if you'd like."

Harry made himself a drink and one for her. She was going to need it.

“We have to talk,” she said when she reappeared.

She was dressed simply, in a white blouse left halfway unbuttoned and jeans, and her hair was down, draping her shoulders. She looked bewitching despite the somber expression fixed resolutely on her face. Harry found himself wishing she did not look quite so desirable.

“Yes, we do have to talk.” He took a long swallow of his drink.

“About us. We have to talk about us.”

“Before we get to that, there’s something more important I have to tell you.”

She was taken aback, as if he’d just slapped her. Suddenly, she sprang from the chair she’d been sitting in and turned away from Harry. “What is more important, Harry? Your work? Is that what you’re going to say? You don’t even have that excuse any longer, do you? You haven’t had anything to do with the department for the last five days. What do you do all day and night?”

There was no way he could stop her. All this had been building up and she was determined to let it out. Harry had the sense this was a speech she’d been rehearsing over long sleepless nights. Sleepless nights that were visible in the dark circles under her eyes, and she was bound and determined to deliver it.

My father was right,” she said in exasperation, “when he told me never to get involved with a cop. One is dead and the other might as well be for all I see of him. ”

Harry had to acknowledge the truth of what she was saying, but there was no way at this moment he could make her understand it was too late to change him. And as much as he wanted her he also had to admit—at least to himself—that she was better off without him.

Yet when she demanded an explanation from him, he could provide her with none. He had come to warn her of the danger that hung over her and her child. Nothing else, not even the fate of their relationship, mattered nearly as much.

“Will you listen to me a minute?”

She crossed her arms defiantly under her breasts, gave him a searching look, and waited. “I’m listening.”

“The man who murdered your husband is still at large.” He hadn’t meant to put it so bluntly, but now that it was out he felt a great weight lifted off him.

“What did you say?”

He told her all the details just as he'd learned them. He even told her the theft of his gun had taken place in her apartment. He'd led her to believe the theft had occurred when he was at home, again because he had not wished to alarm her. At the time, he had been under the impression the threat was directed against himself alone, and had had nothing to do with her. Now, he wasn't at all sure that was so.

"Why didn't you tell me this before?"

Her face was ashen. It was a struggle for her, Harry could see, to retain her composure. He felt suddenly they were strangers.

"I didn't want to upset you," he said.

It was the truth, but it didn't sound convincing.

"What happens now?"

Harry realized how overwhelmed she was by this thing. She was not asking him what she should do now, because it seemed to her that events had spun out of control. She was a victim buffeted by the prevailing winds of fate, and the only determination worth making was to discover where trouble was next going to come from.

"The first thing I suggest you do is move out of here. It's no good changing locks or putting in an expensive security system. If Gallant wants to, he can get around any lock or system devised by man."

"You sound like you admire him."

"Let's say that I will no longer make the mistake of underestimating him. He hasn't lost his touch after six years in prison. Actually I think he's gotten better."

"So I move. Just like that. I find a new apartment . . ."

"No. That's not good enough, I'm afraid. A new apartment, a new phone number, it won't mean a thing. He will still find you out."

Sheila looked as though she might burst out crying, not from fear so much as from frustration.

"What the hell does the goddamn son of a bitch want from me?"

"I don't know," Harry said. "I wish I did, but I truly don't know."

"Isn't it enough that he killed Sam?"

Her voice was piercing, not quite hysterical, but building up to it.

"Evidently it isn't. Look, Sheila, where is the safest, the most secure place you can think of?"

Sheila thought for a moment, then answered, "My father's estate. He has enough guards up there to form an army. But I'm not about to move in with my father . . ."

Harry cut short her protest. "It's only temporary, Sheila, until we

find this bastard. And we will find him." What he meant by we, of course, was himself. "Until then put aside domestic quarrels for awhile. It's your life we're talking about, your life and Louise's."

It was the mention of her daughter's name that did it. Slowly, reluctantly, she nodded her head, signaling her acquiescence. "I'll call him tonight."

"Just tell him you're coming up there as soon as you're packed."

"This can't wait until tomorrow morning?"

"Don't you understand, Sheila, you haven't the luxury of waiting. James Gallant doesn't wait. So get your daughter ready and I'll drive you up there."

"All right," she said, lighting a cigarette. She detested cigarettes, and had given them up when Harry first met her. She only resorted to them when she was very anxious. And God knows, she had reason over the past five days to be anxious. "All right, it shouldn't take long." There was something else on her mind. She hadn't left the room yet.

"What is it?" Harry asked.

"I want you to know that I love you, but it takes too much out of me, loving you. So once you leave me off at my father's I want you to promise me one thing."

"Of course." He might have spoken too soon.

"You'll never see me again, and you'll never call me. Because you'll start it all over again in me if I see you or hear the sound of your voice. Do I have your word on that?"

After a long silence, Harry said, "You have my word."

CHAPTER

Ten

"No, I am afraid Mr. Turner is on vacation, but if there's anything I can help you with."

Harry told the woman he needed to speak to Mr. Turner personally and asked when he'd be back.

"At the end of the month."

"That's a fairly long time."

"Well, he had it coming. He saved up his vacation days so he could go to Hawaii. He's always been fond of Hawaii."

Hawaii, Harry thought. He supposed it was a fitting place to contemplate the impending collapse of the world's economy and a nuclear holocaust.

In spite of Turner's absence from the city, Harry decided to return to his apartment on Jackson. Perhaps there he could discover something—aside from fading newsletters of *The Saving Remnant*—which could shed some light on the man's activities. Other than providing Harry with information relating to Turner's work with the city government, Reineke had dug up little useful material. Turner's record was spotless. His credit rating was superb and so far as the SFPD was concerned, he'd never been in trouble with the law. This image of respectability did not square with the picture of a militant survivalist who sanctioned war games and orgies on his property.

For what Harry planned on doing, there was no more suitable time than night. It was when most burglars operated, it was also when police officers without a warrant operated—particularly those officers who were on temporary suspension.

The Chinese matron he'd spoken to the last time he'd tried calling on Turner at home was not to be seen. It was possible Turner had chosen to live in Chinatown because of the lower rents. It was also possible, and more likely, that he'd done so because he preferred an obscure location to hole up in.

Turner lived on the third floor, in an apartment that overlooked the street. There was a backway reached by a small paved alley and Harry proceeded down it. An elderly man, also Chinese, was sweeping a neighboring porch. When he saw Harry he watched him quizzically.

Harry pretended to ring Turner's bell. The Chinese man shook his head, then resumed his sweeping. Harry waited until the man finished and went inside.

The door had been left open. In the gray light of the empty hallway, Harry noticed a set of stairs which he took up to Turner's apartment. From a door opposite, rock music was blasting. The snap of the lock as Harry forced it, was scarcely audible with the music so loud.

Rather than switch on a light and attract attention, Harry elected to use a flashlight. He needed little light to see it was a drab apartment consisting of three rooms, and cluttered to the rafters with newspapers, many of which had been clipped for specific articles, and magazines which lay in stacks along the walls. There was hardly room enough to move to the bathroom or to the bed which had been left unmade.

Notebooks were piled on top of a table in the front room, and examining them, Harry assumed they were in Turner's hand, and found they constituted an outline of a book he appeared to be writing. The book Turner envisioned, championed putting money in gold, silver, antiques, rugs, strategic metals, anything, in short, that wasn't paper currency or bonds. A part of the book—and it seemed to be an enormously ambitious project—was to be devoted to the war that was sure to follow in the wake of the economic decline. Turner made it clear that survival was not only possible, but probable, so long as the reader followed his prescriptions.

Harry was in the midst of perusing these notebooks, hoping to find the clue Turner might have left to identify himself, when the door behind him squeaked.

It wasn't much of a sound, and with the rumble of music coming from across the corridor, it virtually drowned it out. Nonetheless, the squeak was sharp and cutting, like chalk scratched across a blackboard. Harry felt it more than heard it. He glanced over his shoulder, but saw nothing in the gloom.

Maybe it was nothing. Still he doused his flashlight, dropping onto the floor while simultaneously extracting his gun.

All at once, there was a concussive blast and the door disintegrated in dust and an explosion of fragments that scattered across the room like shrapnel.

A light shone into the room. Harry couldn't tell what sort of light it was, but it was enormously powerful, throwing everything into relief, like lightning.

Harry was so dazzled by the light's intensity, he could barely see to shoot. He rolled to the side as another gun blast demolished the table,

and with it, Turner's notebooks. Scraps of paper filled the air and came floating down covering Harry. Soon he was blanketed with Turner's broken paragraphs, sentences, words.

He fired. He hit the wall. Blinking furiously, he attempted to dispel the spots of phosphorescent green light that had been temporarily imprinted on his retinas. There was yet a third blast which blew an enormous hole in the wall of old newspapers Turner had amassed, while at the same time setting them ablaze.

Harry sprang up and rushed headlong into the adjoining room. A succession of shots followed him. One knocked out a window and sent the glass cascading down onto Jackson Street. A second hit a radiator, producing a terrific clanging din that was only a prelude to a great thud as the radiator collapsed to the floor.

Smoke, meanwhile, was pouring into the apartment and out the ruptured window into the street. It was dense and acrid and rapidly sucking the oxygen out of the air.

With such an abundance of paper material in the place, it was no wonder the fire spread as quickly as it did. It leapt from one pile of magazines and newspapers to the next. When Harry looked behind him, he saw the mattresses were aflame. In front of him, the fire was voraciously consuming the entire dining and living rooms. He suspected his assailants had fled—they would only put their lives in peril by trying to pursue him into the flames—and they must have assumed their mission was done. It would be easy to imagine Harry was trapped and would soon go up in smoke along with old copies of the *Chronicle, Barron's Weekly, Soldier of Fortune,* and Turner's own unique contributions to American arts and letters.

There was just one window available to him in the only corner which was still free from the enveloping blaze. He tried drawing it open, but it was painted shut. Though he might eventually have gotten it unstuck, he did not have the time to struggle with it. So he knocked out the glass with the butt of his gun. The gun was getting harder to hold because the metal was absorbing the heat.

Sticking his head through the jagged opening he'd created, he breathed deeply. For a moment this was enough, just to be able to breathe air not contaminated by smoke. But as the flames lapped at his feet, singeing his ankles, he recognized he'd have to act quickly.

Unfortunately, there was no fire escape. Gazing down, all he could see was a drop of three floors. A great many faces, predominently Chinese, were staring up at him, their expressions reflecting a mixture of horror and fascination. Up the block he could hear the wail of sirens, but he doubted whether help would come soon enough to

rescue him from his predicament.

He pounded out as much of the remaining glass as he could though there were still huge shards clinging to the frame. It proved a torturous maneuver squeezing himself through the broken window. There was barely room to accommodate the thickness of his body. He decided to go feet first so he'd have the windowsill to cling to when he got his body fully out.

But there were still several ragged pieces of glass that lay across the length of the windowsill. When Harry struggled to retain his grip, forcing his hands to carry the entire weight of his body, the glass cut into his palms and his fingers. The more he struggled to hold on the more deeply the glass cut, until the pain from the wounds and the sheer physical exertion of keeping himself suspended merged into one agonizing spasm that almost caused him to blank out altogether.

There was no way he could continue to hold on for more than another fifteen or twenty seconds. Already he could feel his fingers slipping. Looking down between his legs, he saw the window immediately below was drawn open. It was maybe a foot or two below his dangling feet.

He tried to ignore the pain in his hands and concentrated instead on his legs which he swung as far out as he could get them, then let go of the windowsill, shooting his legs in toward the building at the exact same moment so he succeeded in altering his downward trajectory.

He fell at a pronounced angle, his legs propelling the rest of his body. A couple of seconds later, he found himself lying in an awkward heap in somebody's bedroom. Something had torn or else been twisted in his left leg, and his hands hurt like hell and continued to bleed.

Dazedly, he looked about him, only to find he was being observed. Not more than six feet away, a man of about sixty and a girl—who appeared scarcely older than twelve—were entwined in bed, all hairy limbs and soft thighs and gray matted hair and blond tresses. Their presence together explained why they'd not gone to their window to see what all the commotion was about in the apartment above them. Shootouts, fires, police sirens: what possible difference did it make to them? The possible demise of Harry Callahan was not worth coitus interruptus. However, his unexpected appearance in their bedroom did cause them to look up.

Harry managed to get to his feet and unsteadily proceeded to the door. The couple gaped at him, too much in shock to speak.

"Sorry about bursting in on you like this," he said. "Just go back to what you were doing, folks."

He opened the door and stepped out.

“You didn’t get him, I told you you wouldn’t get him. Your men, you’ll pardon me for saying this, are shit.”

Turner’s face went very red. It was unlikely he was going to forgive Gallant. “My men are professionals. They are trained for combat in war, they are trained to resist the Communists. Some of them have served in Rhodesia, in Nam, in Angola, they’re better than you can ever hope to be. And when I ask for your opinion, I will solicit it. You owe your life to me.”

Gallant shrugged. He had no desire to argue with Turner, not so long as he was still dependent on him. But on the other hand, he did not want Turner or his end-of-the-world mercenaries poaching on his territory. And Harry was *his* territory. It was one of those strange ironies of life that Gallant now favored Harry at Turner’s expense. When the time was ripe, he would move in for the kill. But the time wasn’t ripe and he surely did not need any surrogates undertaking the kill for him.

He tried, as diplomatically as possible, to make Turner understand this.

Turner was unconvinced. “I know we go way back, Jimmy, but this is not a debt you can call in. Do you think it’s a mere indulgence, taking out Callahan? I don’t give a shit about him. As far as I’m concerned you could have him. But it’s no longer a question of what you want. It’s gotten beyond that. Now he’s jeopardizing the Saving Remnant. After that fuckup a week ago when he came out here, do you think I’m about to sit back and let him do further damage?”

“Hey, what’s the problem? He busted me in that fuckup and I’m free.”

“Not the least because of my influence.” Turner leaned back in the Queen Anne chair he’d expropriated for his personal use. “You know, he’s busy checking out how you and I are linked, and I wouldn’t be surprised he discovers it if he’s not stopped in time. Why do you think I spread that story about taking off to Hawaii? I had to go underground.”

Given their location at that moment, Gallant said, “Well, you’re underground all right.”

And it wasn’t an atomic bomb, but a San Francisco homicide detective that had driven him under, Gallant thought, not without some amusement.

The phone was ringing on Turner’s desk. He picked it up, spoke briefly to whoever was on the other end, then, placing a hand over the receiver, brusquely dismissed his visitor. “You have an appointment with Dr. Pine, I understand.”

Gallant indicated that this was so.

"Well, then, don't keep him waiting."

"What about Callahan?"

"I have nothing more to say about the matter. He's no longer your concern." His unrelenting gaze only emphasized the threat his words so thinly veiled.

Gallant was not a man to be so easily dissuaded. After all, he'd not escaped from prison twice, once by virtue of his own cunning, once by virtue of a legal technicality, to give up on his goal and slink away into the night. If he had to kill Turner so be it. Without Turner, he lacked the means to infiltrate Jay Silk's compound.

In any case, his face still needed altering before he could expose himself to the world again—especially now that it was likely the police had learned he was not dead.

Although Gallant resolutely and routinely confronted danger of one sort or another without fear, he was reduced to jelly by the thought of having someone take a scalpel to his face. He had visions of emerging from the operations Pine intended to conduct on him scarred for life.

When he entered Dr. Pine's improvised surgery, he was scarcely reassured. The presence of a nurse, particularly a pretty one, would have been of some consolation, but apart from Jonas Pine, there was only one assistant, a broadly built man with a somewhat moronic expression on his face. He was standing ominously in the glowing light from the lamp dangling over the operating table. In back of him was a sink where Pine was scrubbing, and several shelves containing sterilized sutures, bandages, and trays of instruments. Gallant was given to understand this operating theater was installed in anticipation of any emergencies that might develop among those of the Saving Remnant who'd escaped death at Ground Zero.

Dr. Pine wheeled about to regard his patient. His mouth was covered by a mask, his hands hung out in front of him, sopping wet.

"Just take off your shirt, please," he said, "and my assistant, Mr. Mulqueen will do the rest."

"That's what I'm afraid of," Gallant muttered under his breath. "That's just what I'm afraid of."

It seemed like days, but it was merely a matter of hours, till Gallant recovered consciousness. He was stretched out on a bed in one of the few rooms in the shelter that was not cluttered with antiques. It was a functional room with nothing but several other beds, like his, though they were all empty. Nothing hurt but he suffered from an

uncomfortable numbness in his face. When he tried to move his lips, he felt no sensation whatsoever.

Lifting his hands to his face, he found that it was partially enveloped in gauze. Perforations in it allowed his eyes, nose, and mouth to show through.

All he could do now, he supposed, was pray.

It occurred to him, as he lay there, that sometime during the operation, he'd overheard a conversation taking place between Pine and Mulqueen. The anesthesia had put him under all right, but a part of his consciousness must have remained alert for a time, for how else could he have recalled what they said? And there was no doubt in his mind the conversation had happened, and he wasn't just imagining it.

He remembered distinctly Mulqueen had told Pine of a hit he'd been contracted to undertake at Turner's behest. Pine might have been used to such talk for he'd expressed little interest in the matter until Mulqueen had mentioned the name of the intended victim. It was to be Harry Callahan.

"Oh yes," Pine had said, "I remember him, the detective who had us arrested. Strange bird, that one."

Mulqueen proved very talkative. He said he'd served in mercenary forces in Angola and in Laos before the end of the Vietnamese War. He and a friend, whom he wouldn't compromise by mentioning by name, were not going to fail like the others who'd followed Harry to Jackson Street. The hit, Mulqueen stated, was to be made early the next morning, while Harry was asleep in his apartment.

Gallant jerked up in bed. His body seemed to work, only his face had been touched. He couldn't let this hit come to pass. To be denied the pleasure of killing Callahan himself just because Turner was fearful for the safety of his organization was an unspeakable humiliation.

He rummaged through the utility closets in the corner and located his street clothes. His wallet and his two guns—the Dan Wesson and his newly purchased .44—were still there. No one would have had reason to take them away. He was, after all, regarded as one of Turner's best friends.

The first thing he had to find out was the time. With no windows, the room he was in was a timeless environment. He dreaded the thought that it might already be the next day and he was too late to forestall the hit.

Opening the door, he looked out to see one of Turner's followers pass. He was making a great deal of noise with so many keys jangling at his side.

He stared at Gallant, because he resembled a mummy with his face swathed in opaque bandages. Then he shrugged and continued on. It was none of his concern.

"You have the time?" Gallant called to him.

That this curious bandaged figure should have spoken to him was something of a shock, stopping him in his tracks. After a long hesitation, he said that it was a little past midnight.

Gallant was vastly relieved. Luck hadn't deserted him yet. If he drove quickly, he could be in San Francisco before the hit was attempted. That meant he would have to borrow—well, steal—someone's car since Turner had taken his away from him to prevent him from leaving the shelter. But to James William Gallant, car theft was nothing new. One could say it was almost a habit.

Mulqueen and the man called Hennessy—not because that's what his parents had named him, but because that's what he drank—were standing in front of the apartment building in the Nob Hill district where Harry Callahan had lived for the last several years. Having reconnoitered the area, without so much as drawing a second look from those few people wandering about the streets late at night, they decided on entering the building itself. Mulqueen was carrying a Colt XM177E2. They'd ceased manufacturing the model some years back, which Mulqueen thought a shame. Nonetheless, it was one of his favorite weapons. He'd used it in the Special Forces in Laos, and it had served him well in that part of the world. What was so extraordinary about it was it could double as a sniping or as an assault weapon, could even be employed as a grenade launcher with its 11.5-inch barrel. It also came with three collapsible stocks.

Hennessy, a short stubby man with granite for muscles and the dead yellowed eyes of someone who'd spent too long in the bush, settled for a Sterling Mark 5, a British 9mm gun designed so virtually all sound is eliminated. Hennessy was accustomed to moving and killing in silence.

They risked unveiling their weapons only when they'd gotten to the third floor of the building, and were positioned right outside Harry's door.

Hennessy was skillful when it came to sabotaging locks, and just as quiet as when he blew open a man's skull.

To their mutual disappointment, however, there was no Harry. He wasn't hiding—his apartment contained few places in which to hide in any case—he simply wasn't there, and it was getting on toward two in the morning. As they'd been briefed by Turner in advance, they knew

that Harry was on suspension so that meant he could not be working at such a late hour. And he couldn't be with his girlfriend, according to Turner, because she'd broken up with him and moved in with her father up in that place above Paradise Road. The only conclusion they could draw, based on what they knew of Harry's life, was he was out somewhere getting drunk with his friends. The way things were going for him, he'd probably want to get drunk.

So they waited, biding their time in the darkness of their victim's flat. They did treat themselves to a beer from his refrigerator since they naturally assumed that after tonight he wouldn't be consuming any of it himself.

After nearly half a hour, they heard the slam of a car door and voices coming from the street below. Mulqueen went to the window. He'd gotten a glimpse of Harry that night at the shelter when he'd come storming in to rescue Sugar. It was Harry. He was saying goodbye to whoever it was in the magenta Chevy who'd given him a lift.

Mulqueen wondered why he hadn't driven his own car, but he soon understood; both of Harry's hands were wrapped in bandages. Turner had said nothing about this, maybe he hadn't known. The more he watched, peeking out behind a corner of the shade, the more it became apparent Harry had little mobility in either hand. It seemed to take him forever just to dig his keys out of his pocket.

As if that were not a sufficient handicap, it also appeared he was intoxicated. He wasn't staggering, but his walk hinted at the amount of liquor coursing through his blood.

To Mulqueen it did not seem conceivable this was the man who had Turner so frightened. Yet that was not his judgment to make. All he had to do was make the kill.

He anticipated an easy kill. A man who could barely get his keys out of his pocket was not someone who could easily defend himself with a .44 Magnum and hope to stay alive.

"No fucking challenge," he whispered to Hennessy who characteristically remained silent.

Mulqueen looked out again, but could no longer see Harry. That would mean he was already on his way up. They could hear footsteps on the landing. They grew louder until they were coming from just outside the door.

They trained their guns on the door. What they planned to do was to allow Harry to enter and shut the door behind him. They wanted him to trap himself. Then they would open up.

One lock snapped open, then a second. Mulqueen and Hennessy

raised their guns higher, waiting.

When the door opened, it wasn't Harry who stood there, partly silhouetted in the light from the hallway beyond. It was a man in a mask of bandages.

The two assassins were so astounded that for several moments they couldn't bring themselves to react. Then it dawned on Mulqueen that it must be Gallant. He'd assisted Pine in putting the dressings on him not more than twelve hours before. What the hell was he doing here?

Gallant had anticipated their temporary paralysis. The .44 in his right hand, the Dan Wesson .357 in the other, he fired simultaneously on both men.

Mulqueen was struck in the neck and he toppled over without getting off a shot. Blood rushed so profusely from the wound it soon had his whole face covered. The head had nearly been decapitated and it lay at an angle to the neck which in life would have been impossible.

With Hennessy, Gallant wasn't quite so lucky. The bullet had hit Hennessy, catching him below his left collarbone, and knocking him over, but the injury was not critical. He still had hold of the Sterling. He picked himself off the floor with a groan, discharging his gun at the same time.

Gallant couldn't hear the gun, with its subsonic rounds, but he was very much aware of the racket it made as it tore up the windows and sent a lamp tumbling to the floor.

Yet the chest wound had had its effect. Hennessey was resisting unconsciousness, but the struggle all but exhausted him. Each time he tried to sight Gallant, the man seemed to vanish on him, dissolving into the darkness.

Gallant hadn't vanished, he'd simply shifted positions, like a ballet dancer. With only one man to worry about, he turned both his handguns on Hennessy and fired again.

Hennessy staggered back with the two additional wounds. His weapon slipped from his hand. He didn't seem to want to die. He doubled up and crumpled to the floor. His blood began pumping out of his ears. He made an especially loud gagging noise as he choked on the blood leaking into his throat.

By the time Hennessy had breathed his last, Harry had arrived. He was out of breath from running up the stairs and he held his gun in his hand although the strain of maneuvering his fingers around it told on his face.

It was one hell of a mess, with two bodies, and all the blood, and the shattered windows and bullet-riddled furniture. Only two things were missing: the killer and an explanation.

CHAPTER

Eleven

The day finally came when the beard was fully grown. The worst scars were well hidden. To his surprise, his face did look completely different, though Dr. Pine had only tampered with the angle of his nose and the set of his eyes. It was uncanny how a few alterations, and the growth of hair, could so alter one's appearance. Similarly, his voice had a gruff quality to it that was also the result of Pine's handiwork. When he listened to himself on a tape-recorder, he was forced to admit he would never have recognized his new voice.

Gallant didn't know whether he liked the face Jonas Pine had given him. Nor was he convinced he looked any better than he had previously. Yet of one thing there could be absolutely no doubt, he could expose himself in public without the slightest fear that the police, or even an old acquaintance would identify him as James William Gallant.

When Turner sent for him, Gallant had a sense of what was coming. Now that the plastic surgery was finished, and his beard had thickened, he had expected this meeting any day. He assumed Turner would tell him his life at the shelter had ended, and he was soon to be assigned to the staff of Jay Silk.

Turner was in good spirits. For several weeks, he'd languished in seclusion, certain the failure of Mulqueen and Hennessy to kill Harry Callahan meant his downfall. Though he isolated himself from his followers, occasionally accusing them of deserting him, he never gave an indication he had any idea Gallant was responsible for killing his men. And how could he? Gallant had been careful to cover his tracks.

Yet the expected had not happened. Harry Callahan had not come crashing through his door with a warrant in one hand and a gun in the other. Harry was blamed for the killings, which only added to the controversy in which he was already embroiled. Rather than being restored to the force, as Turner had anticipated, Harry had simply disappeared. Gone underground. So while he held out little hope of locating him to make a third attempt on his life, Turner was no longer worried. If Harry was safe from him, it worked the other way too. He was safe from Harry.

When Gallant entered his private office, he looked up at him with a

broad, slightly diabolical, smile. “You know, Jimmy, you don’t look half bad.”

Gallant shrugged. “I think sometimes my eyes are a bit too close together.”

“No, take it from me, you look fine. The good doctor has created a man who all the women will fall for.”

Not all the women, thought Gallant, just one will do.

“So, Grant, what happens now?”

“You’ve done your homework?”

“Homework?” He. realized Turner was referring to the concentrated course he’d given himself in collectibles. “Yes, I’ve boned up on what you wanted me to. I studied the fucking catalogues. I stayed up nights memorizing your bloody picture books. I spent hours with your paintings and chests and fucking tea sets. There’s nothing else to do around here.” Especially, he considered, since Turner had declared an end to the weekend entertainment now that there was no Samoan and no beach boy to do the singles bars and bring home a woman anxious to party.

Turner reached down below his desk and brought into view a small gold-framed painting. “Can you tell me who did this and in what period?”

It was a study of a group of bathers seated by a lake.

“Seurat. I’d say 1860,1865, somewhere around there.”

Turner nodded. “I’m impressed. You have done your homework.”

“That’s the test?”

“Short and sweet.”

“So I’m to go up there to Paradise Road and the man hires me.”

“Almost. But there’s one little thing that has to be done beforehand.”

Gallant knew it couldn’t be that simple.

“What is that?”

“You can’t become the family chauffeur until you dispose of the family chauffeur they already have.”

“You never mentioned that problem.”

Turner’s smile widened. “It was so minor I thought it could wait.”

The photograph that Turner had shown him hardly did justice to the Silk estate. Perched on a hillside, it commanded an imposing view of the bay. The mansion itself could not be seen from the road that ran

below it. Pines, alder, and oak grew in such dense profusion they kept it entirely concealed.

Although Gallant saw no guards or patrols, he guessed that the security was tight and any intruder, even a stray hiker, would be stopped and questioned should he wander too far onto the Silk property.

At this stage, however, penetrating the security system was not what interested Gallant. He'd see the mansion and its grounds soon enough. For now, he was only concerned with the chauffeur and his comings and goings.

Turner had given him a black TransAm to use. He was scrupulous about keeping from sight. He'd park off the asphalt road that wound its way up the hillside toward the estate. With a pair of high-powered binoculars, he'd sit in his car from six-thirty in the morning all the way through the afternoon, through blazing sun and thickening fog, never removing his eyes from the road. After more than a week, he thought he pretty well had the chauffeur's schedule down.

Twice during the week, on Wednesdays and Fridays, the long gray limousine would appear, with Silk himself. The limousine wouldn't return until the evenings. Gallant assumed these were the two days that the retired Silk still went into town, maybe to his private club or to a business luncheon with his accountants. On the other days, the schedule was irregular, which may have been because it depended on the needs of whoever else lived on the estate. Very often, Gallant would observe Sheila riding in the back of the limousine, sometimes with her daughter, often alone. To Gallant, she always appeared preoccupied, her eyes directed straight ahead. She looked like a princess, detached and unattainable and more beautiful than when he'd first seen her after his escape. He was more resolved than ever to seduce her, and to make sure Harry became aware of it before he took his life.

But there seemed no opportunity to get close to the chauffeur so long as he was performing his duties. It was far better, Gallant reasoned, to kill him when he was on his own, relaxing. While he lived somewhere on the grounds of the estate, he did from time to time go into the city by himself. Naturally, for this purpose he wasn't allowed to use the limousine. Instead, he relied on his own car. Gallant hadn't seen a Shelly-Cobra GT in sometime which, so far as he knew, they'd stopped production on back in the mid-Sixties. The chauffeur had a love of old cars, he decided, maybe retooled them in his spare time.

He began following the chauffeur into the city to see where he went. The chauffeur seemed, from Gallant's observation, to be a

cautious man. He was probably armed, but only when he was acting in his official capacity. Out of uniform, he drove at an alarming speed with little thought to the traffic rules. Gallant trailed him all the way from Paradise Road to the corner of Columbus and Broadway, and not just once or twice, but three times, without the chauffeur ever giving any sign he was aware he was being followed.

The chauffeur liked to take in a few topless bars on his nights off. He was a tall strapping man, and it was unlikely anyone would give him trouble no matter how disreputable the clientele was that frequented such places.

A barker stood in front of a flickering neon sign ablaze in yellow and purple, proclaiming: GIRLS, GIRLS, GIRLS, motioning for passers-by to enter, assuring them, “No cover, no minimum, have a free look. Don’t be shy, step inside.”

The chauffeur, whose name Gallant had yet to find out, evidently suffered no feelings of shyness. He heeded the barker and walked into the arched doorway which Gallant supposed was meant to resemble Arab architecture.

Gallant followed a few paces behind. The barker gave him an encouraging gaze. “No cost to look,” he said as though he were worried Gallant might suddenly change his mind.

Inside, it was dim except for the stage which was bathed in a harsh pink light that made the three nude girls gyrating there look as though they were suffering from some tropical ailment that discolored their skin. The music was raucous and driven by a propulsive beat. It was originating from a jukebox by the entrance, and whenever there was a break between selections, the girls would stand around awkwardly, occasionally exchanging remarks with the customers below, until the music again resumed.

The chauffeur took a stool by the bar to Gallant’s relief. It was far preferable to make his approach at a bar, even one as uncrowded as this one, than to try to find a pretext to join a solitary man at a table for two.

After the chauffeur had ordered a drink and settled himself in, Gallant selected a stool close to his. The chauffeur didn’t notice, being too mesmerized by the sight of the naked flesh just a few feet away from him. It would have been within touching distance actually if he decided to stand up. To Gallant, the girls seemed ordinary. Only one held any attraction for him, and even then he found her too fleshy. He wondered idly what Sheila would look like naked.

He returned his attention to his mark. At a break in the music, he addressed the chauffeur. “Say, could you tell me something?”

The chauffeur turned, regarding him with puzzlement. “Are you talking to me?”

“That’s right. I was wondering . . . uh . . . whether these girls fuck, you know, the customers.”

The chauffeur shrugged. “Sure, if you pay them. A twenty will get you twenty minutes, that’s how it works. They take you upstairs as soon as they get offstage. But it’s never longer, see, because twenty minutes later, they’ve got to be back on again. These aren’t the best though. I know, I’ve tried. There’s one coming on later, name’s Lisa, she’s something, you wait.”

“No problem, I’m not going anywhere.” Gallant reached over, extending his hand. “The name’s Dave,” he said.

“Dave, pleased to meet you. My name’s Roy. I drive people around for a living, rich people. What do you do?”

“Me? I don’t do shit. I’m presently unemployed, you might say, but I got a job off the books so there’s no cash flow problem. Speaking of which, may I offer you a drink?”

The drinks were overpriced and whatever Roy’s salary might be, he was clearly pleased to have someone offer to buy him a second round.

Gallant moved to the stool next to Roy’s and began to engage him in conversation, allowing him to do most of the talking. From what he gathered, Roy lived a lonely life. His job was shit, his employers were shit, he said, and his ambition was to save up enough money so that he could buy a cab and go off on his own, and not to have to answer to anyone ever again.

“What kind of rich people are these?”

Roy freely told him. He mentioned his employer had a daughter who’d recently moved in.

“She a looker?”

“Oh, she’s something all right,” said Roy appreciatively. “And you can tell she’s hot to trot, but she’s so goddamn stuck up there’s no getting close to her. She just sees a uniform, she never sees me.”

Feigning sympathy, Gallant nodded and insisted on buying Roy another drink. Roy protested Gallant was spending too much money on him, but the protest was a half-hearted one. After the fourth round, Roy felt obligated to buy Gallant a drink. Gallant accepted, only because he didn’t want the chauffeur’s suspicions aroused. The man might think Gallant was coming on to him, and bolt. And as Roy was a big man with a great capacity to hold his liquor, and as the drinks were clearly watered, Gallant resigned himself to a very long night.

Predictably, Roy broke off conversation once Lisa came on stage.

Roy was right about her. She possessed a statuesque body and a classically proportioned face framed by a flow of blond hair. She came on in a sleeveless blouse and shorts cut way up her thighs, and these two articles of clothing she quickly discarded. A barely visible slip of black cloth covered her crotch and after awhile she dispensed with this too.

Roy was dazzled. “After this I’m going to have to excuse myself,” he mumbled. “Me and Lisa are old friends.”

Roy sipped leisurely at his drink, watching Lisa dance. He took no notice of Gallant.

Gallant was extracting from the inside of his jacket an icepick, a small one to be sure, but sharp and lethal enough.

In the reflection of the garish pink light, Roy’s profile was clearly visible. The hollow of his cheekbone, the irregular tapering of his nose, suggested he’d once had it broken.

Roy was spellbound by Lisa’s writhing and the convulsive movements she made to mimick orgasm. Gallant raised the ice pick so if Roy had glanced sideways, there was no way he could miss it. But his eyes were fastened completely on the stage. Gallant, with one deft motion, guided the ice pick into Roy’s brain, piercing it to a depth of five inches.

Roy’s eyes gaped open for a moment, then clouded over as his consciousness died. Gallant withdrew the ice pick and quickly returned it to his jacket pocket. Roy’s head dropped to the surface of the bar.

There was little blood, just a speck of it at the corner of his eye. Gallant liked this method of killing—it left so little mess.

The barmaid, as voluptuous a specimen as was being offered for view on stage, though only slightly more clothed, came over to him. She gazed down at Roy and frowned.

“I think he’s had a little too much to drink,” Gallant said apologetically.

“You wouldn’t want to get him out of here, would you?”

“I’m sorry, I can’t take responsibility for him. He’s just a guy I met in here. But give him a few minutes, maybe he’ll come to.”

“Yeah, sure.”

“You get Lisa here, you’ll see.”

The barmaid was dubious, but didn’t press the matter. Gallant made sure to leave her a big tip.

It was remarkable how much his mind had absorbed during his stay at Turner's underground condominium. For instance, he had only to glance at the cabinet positioned by the fireplace to know that it was probably designed by Pierre Manguin in the time of Napoleon III. The painting above the fireplace was a portrait of a dour-looking woman by Mary Cassatt; the small abstract figure of bronze resting on the table was by Boccioni; the chair he occupied was designed by Gio Ponti; and the one his host lounged upon was an elegant Mies Van Der Rohe.

Silk looked the part of a multimillionaire. He was approaching his sixties, but he projected an aura of radiant good health and vitality that many men decades younger might envy. His hair was solidly gray, his face had a rugged, somewhat unfinished appearance to it, and Gallant guessed that he had come late to money. But even poverty-stricken, Jay Silk would be a natural aristocrat. Gallant could see where Sheila came by her looks—and her arrogance.

"You come highly recommended by Mr. Turner," Jay Silk was saying, glancing down at a sheaf of papers he held in his hand. Perhaps, Gallant thought, it was his fraudulent resume, but he wasn't sure just what else Turner had provided the man.

"I owe Mr. Turner a great deal." Gallant was adept at sounding respectful and self-deprecating if need be. Jail had provided him with considerable practice at it, after all.

"You know, while I am not an ardent supporter of Mr. Turner's organization, I do send him a small donation from time to time. I am in accord with many of his opinions. It's just that I am not always convinced The Saving Remnant is the best means of effecting the necessary changes in this society. It seems to me we must get out there and fight rather than hunker down in a fallout shelter. Are you with me?"

Fight for what? Gallant wondered. But, of course, he nodded to signal his assent to what Jay Silk was saying.

"Now, to the matter at hand," Silk went on. "I want you to realize the job of chauffeur is one that requires more than just driving members of my household to and fro. Although I am retired, I am still identified with the so-called establishment, and as such, face risks of all kinds."

"You're saying I am also to be a bodyguard?"

"Yes, that's correct." He lowered his eyes to the papers again. "Apparently, you have had the training that would make you ideal for such a role."

"You can rely on it, sir."

“Good. Then it’s agreed. You can start tomorrow. Come here at eight. The pay, by the way, is two hundred and fifty dollars a week, but take into account that you will be provided with food and lodging.”

Silk expected Gallant to balk at the wage, but Gallant surprised him by saying that the salary was fine with him.

“Excellent. I am so happy to have you on board, Mr. . . .” Here he again had to consult Turner’s documentation. “Mr. David Holstrom.”

The two men shook hands. Just before Silk bid him farewell, he had a cautionary note to impart. “Mr. Holstrom, while I make it a point not to pry into the personal lives of my employees, there are certain things I must insist upon. Your predecessor, Mr. Roy Streeter, had, shall we say, certain proclivities. He tended to fall in with unwholesome elements in establishments that are notorious for lewd exhibitions.”

“I see,” Gallant said. “And what happened to Mr. Streeter, if I may ask?”

“He came to a bad end, I’m afraid. He was murdered.”

“Murdered?”

“Yes, a very gruesome business, and you’ll forgive me if I don’t go into detail. What I want from you is your word as a gentleman that you will not engage in acts that might possibly bring dishonor on my name or on my household. It is for your personal integrity as well that I must insist on this.”

“Of course, sir. You have my word,” said Gallant with as much conviction as he could muster, “as a gentleman.”

As Gallant was leaving, escorted by a manservant who seemed nearly as old as the Manguin cabinet, he caught a glimpse of Sheila walking with her daughter along one of the garden paths. She stopped and stared at him. He stared right back.

Their eyes met briefly, then Sheila resumed her walk, Louise racing ahead of her.

“That is Mrs. Richmond, Mr. Silk’s daughter,” declared the manservant.

“Oh, and is there a Mr. Richmond?”

“No, sir, he died several years ago under very tragic circumstances.”

“Well, I am truly sorry to hear about that,” Gallant remarked. “It is surprising she hasn’t remarried. She is a very striking woman.”

“She is at that, sir.”

The rest of the walk, to the gate, where Gallant had left his black

TransAm, was made in silence.

Now that Gallant had secured his employment, and was exactly where he wanted to be, one further piece of old business remained to be completed. He got into his car, assuring the manservant that he'd show up promptly at eight the following morning, and sped away.

Sometime after noon, he arrived at the headquarters of The Saving Remnant.

As he was well-known to the men who patrolled the compound, he was admitted without hesitation. At the main house, he was told that Turner was in the shelter, examining some recent acquisitions to his burgeoning collection of antiques and paintings.

No one else was quite as obsessed with antiques as Turner was, and while he had an assistant with him, cataloguing the pieces, Gallant could see that the assistant was bored and anxious to get back to the shooting range. The coming war against the Communists was what concerned him, not the current war against inflation that Turner was conducting by robbing millionaires of their valuable assets up and down the coast.

The latest haul clearly had Turner excited. "Look at this one, Jimmy! You know what it is?"

"French, I'd say."

"Right on the mark. An Empire cheval-glass." Turner was addressing not Gallant, but Gallant's reflection in the glass.

"Interesting," mumbled Gallant who didn't find it interesting at all.

"And this over here is a Delaherche vase which I think is absolutely superb. And see this, Jimmy . . . this is simply magnificent."

He grabbed hold of a painting and lifted it up for Gallant's inspection. "What do you think?"

"I'm impressed. It's a Matisse, isn't it?"

The colors were bold in the decorative element peculiar to the French master.

"The value of this is incalculable, simply incalculable."

"Of course, you'd never be able to sell it," Gallant noted. "I'm sure the owner has notified the police and every gallery and museum in the country has a description of it."

"That's hardly the point." Turner didn't like to have his enthusiasm dampened. "When the economy is in ruins, do you think that such legalities will make any difference to investors? You're forgetting your lessons."

"So I am, sorry."

Turner continued to describe the latest additions, but Gallant was no longer listening. He was keeping his eye on the assistant, a young man scarcely out of his teens who'd joined The Saving Remnant in hope of adventure. This was not quite what he'd had in mind. Finally, Turner sensed his impatience and told him he could go.

His relief was no greater than Gallants. It was bad enough having to deal with one man, let alone two.

Turner was still rambling on. His words echoed unintelligibly in Gallant's brain. It seemed he was asking Gallant a question.

"Well, Jimmy, how did it go? Tell me, how did your interview go?"

At last, Gallant understood him. "Fine, fine."

"You look a bit peaked, are you sure everything's all right?"

"Absolutely no problem at all."

Turner didn't look convinced, but he returned to his improvised lecture with all the enthusiasm of a museum curator.

Gallant was walking a few paces behind him. Slowly, he inserted his hand into his jacket pocket and wrapped his fingers about the handle of the ice pick there. Slowly he removed it, then slipped it in back of him, out of Turner's view.

Gallant had become so preoccupied by the problem of extracting the ice pick, he neglected to see they were directly in front of the Empire cheval-glass that Turner had first pointed out to him.

Turner's eye caught on the reflection he and Gallant cast on it. It took him a few moments before he realized what the object was Gallant was holding in back of him.

"What the hell?" He whipped about to face Gallant.

Gallant understood his error. He struck out with the ice pick, fast enough to give his benefactor a glancing cut on his stomach. Blood instantly stained the lower half of his lemon-colored shirt.

"You're crazy! You're a fucking madman!" Turner said, lurching backwards. He bumped into a precariously balanced Empire clock and sent it toppling to the floor where it shattered beyond repair. The disturbance did not bring anyone running as Gallant had suspected it would.

Turner struggled to loosen his sidearm from his belt. It was stuck for some reason and though Turner managed to free it, he had exhausted precious moments in doing so.

Gallant advanced on him in a series of long strides. He drove the ice pick into Turner's right arm, once, twice, then a third time, causing him to surrender his grip on the gun. Turner screamed, but still no one

appeared to discover what the matter was. Maybe they were all out on the practice range.

Turner's arm was sopping wet with blood that poured out of the three successive wounds. He started to run, hoping that he could outdistance his attacker, but his foot caught on the Matisse, and he tripped. In tripping, his foot went through the canvas. He flopped to the floor with a wrenching groan, attempted to get himself back up again.

"I hate to do this," Gallant said, seizing him by the hair so that his face would present a better target, "but don't you worry none because I don't aim to kill you. You're a friend, you are."

Taking no assurance from his words, Turner raised his one good arm to fend him off, but to no avail.

Gallant then dug the ice pick into Turner's brain, targeting the very same spot, between the bridge of the nose and the corner of the eye, he had with Roy Streeter. But this time he was careful not to drive it in all the way to the hilt.

Turner flailed like a fish drawn up on land, but in the end ceased moving. He wasn't dead, though his breathing was shallow and his pulse alarmingly low. His eyes betrayed a certain consciousness as Gallant removed the ice pick and carefully cleaned it with a handkerchief.

The injury Turner had sustained was not necessarily going to be fatal. If Gallant had managed to aim the ice pick correctly and pierce the brain to the exact depth he'd hoped to, then the worst that Turner had received was a lobotomy performed without Dr. Jonas Pine's anesthesia. On the other hand, if his estimation had been off, there was no telling what kind of damage his brain might have suffered. It was possible Turner would be left a vegetable for the remainder of his life.

No matter. Gallant had kept his promise and not killed him. It was just as he'd told Jay Silk. He always kept his word—as a gentleman.

CHAPTER

Twelve

Harry never could quite accustom himself to fleabag hotels and out-of-the-way boarding houses run by women who resembled his sixth grade teacher: all gray hair, weathered skin, and glasses. But so long as he cared to remain in the Bay area, he felt he had little choice. A more respectable hotel or even a friend's apartment was to risk being spotted by someone he knew. As it was, that risk was never entirely eliminated.

It was ironic, he thought, that Gallant had forced him to live the same sort of life he was, a life of a fugitive, a life spent underground.

More than once, especially late at night, while he sat in lonely rooms, staring out windows which overlooked bars and all-night fast food joints, he was tempted to pick up the phone and call Sheila. It had been seven weeks, three days, since he'd left her at her father's. He'd rigorously adhered to his promise and made no attempt to contact her. Still he'd held out hope she would change her mind and call him. It never happened. The phone had remained obstinately silent. And now he was on the run, and even if she did want to get hold of him, she'd have no way of ascertaining his whereabouts.

His sole hope, it seemed to him, was to find Gallant and this time make sure that he did not escape. Only then would it be possible for him to return to the force and resume his normal life. That done, he could start thinking about a reconciliation with Sheila. The enormity of the challenge weighed upon him. For days, he scarcely moved from these dreary rooms he'd rented at seventy-five dollars a week, relying on beers and stale sandwiches for sustenance.

But he could not endure this state of affairs any longer. One morning he awoke, determined to take decisive action even though he had little notion as to just what action was possible or likely to do any good.

He would begin, he decided, where he'd begun before, with Grant Turner. He checked with his office and was told by the same vacant-headed secretary that Turner was still vacationing in Hawaii. Had she, or anyone else in the office, been in direct contact with him? Harry asked. No, the secretary admitted, a friend of Turner's had telephoned at his behest.

“How can Mr. Turner keep extending his vacation? He’s been gone over two months. I didn’t know the city permitted its employees that much time off.”

The secretary sounded as though this had her a little confused too. “I am not sure I can answer you, sir. But Mr. Turner has been with this office for many years and he does enjoy certain privileges.”

“You mean he can get away with anything he likes.”

“I wouldn’t put it that way, sir.”

“No, I don’t suppose you would.”

After Harry hung up, he realized he was left with no other choice than to return to the compound off Route 12. Whether Turner had sequestered himself in his fallout shelter, while only pretending to be in Hawaii, or whether he was, in fact, still on vacation was no longer a critical factor in his decision. Turner’s apartment on Jackson Street might have supplied him with no clues to link The Saving Remnant with Gallant, but perhaps among the clutter of antiques and papers crammed into the shelter, he might find the lead that thus far had eluded him.

The car he drove was a coconut-brown Matador he’d secured from a rental agency under a false name. He could not take the chance of using his own car.

This time, Harry anticipated the presence of security patrols in the woods surrounding the headquarters of The Saving Remnant. As he did on his first visit, Harry left his car off the road, well out of sight. But rather than proceeding along the same route he’d taken previously, he elected to circle around on foot, in hope of coming out in back of the house and the adjoining shelter. He assumed no matter how many armed men there might be, there wouldn’t be nearly enough to cover such a large terrain. He further assumed the majority of them would be deployed in close proximity to the front of the compound and astride the narrow roadway leading to it.

As he expected, the area he was proceeding through now was far more tangled and treacherous than the thickets he’d had to contend with before. There was a mat of tendrils and brambles that caught against his feet ensnaring them, causing him to repeatedly stop and free himself. A great many trees had fallen and they too made Harry’s progress difficult.

While there were no sounds aside from the birds calling to each other, and the occasional squirrel scampering along the side of a bough, Harry retained hold of his .44 the entire time. Fortunately, his hands had healed sufficiently so there was no longer any pain in them, just a welter of paling scars to remind him of his experience on

Jackson Street.

By the time the sun was near to setting, late this winter afternoon, Harry began to make out a sound that could not be accounted to any natural cause—gunshots.

First, he'd hear a succession of shots, followed by a sudden stillness, which in turn was followed by another fusillade. The timing of the shots convinced Harry he was approaching the practice range which he'd not gotten a look at the last time he was here.

He crept forward until he came at last to the perimeter of the woods. Peeking through the undergrowth, he could see the backs of the targets. There were a half-dozen of them, mounted on wooden platforms. At several yards further distant, he could make out five figures, each with a handgun, taking aim.

The sun was down and the light remaining in the west was hardly enough for them to see what they were shooting at. As a result, they switched on two big klieg lights that bathed the entire range in a harsh white glow. It also threw the very brush where Harry had taken cover into stark relief.

Someone shouted out a command, but he was too far away for Harry to understand what he'd said. Suddenly the tree to his right was punctured by a gunshot, and all about him shots peppered the ground. Either these five men were very bad marksmen since it appeared that none of them had hit the targets or else, and more likely, they'd spotted Harry. Harry decided he wasn't about to linger to see which one it was.

He plunged into the brush, heading back toward the woods from which he'd come.

So much for surprise, he thought.

He glanced back and saw the men fanning out behind him. As he was beyond the swath of ground lit up by the klieg lights, he believed he was relatively safe. This turned out not to be the case for long. Phosphorous flares began to be launched, turning the gray sky to a luminous white.

Still, even if they could see him, Harry had the advantage provided by the natural cover. Besides which he had a superb view of the men as they rushed across the open space of the practice range. The only reason he didn't shoot was because he wasn't ready to give away his precise location to bring down just one man.

When they'd gotten to the point where the range ended and the woods began, they seemed not to know just what they should do. In spite of the flares, they hadn't determined exactly where Harry was.

One of the men, who'd assumed the role of leader, gave orders they should divide themselves up, with two to enter the woods at one point, and the three others at another, approximately twenty-five yards away, in the hope of either surrounding the intruder or else of forcing him from his cover onto the field where he'd be exposed.

It wasn't difficult to figure out their strategy, even though Harry failed to overhear their deliberations. He was close enough to the edge of the woods to see very clearly what they intended on doing.

If he'd had any sense, he would have gone back the way he'd come, for there was no question he could lose himself very easily among the brush and the felled trees, but that would mean he'd lost his opportunity forever of getting inside the shelter. Little doubt existed in his mind that after this incident, reinforcements would only be added to those already on patrol, making it that much harder to penetrate the compound's defenses.

So instead Harry decided to stay put. To his astonishment, no one else had come out of the shelter to assist these five men. Maybe it was thought that they were merely practicing war-games, maybe no one wanted to be bothered.

Of course, the men hunting him down were very noisy. There was no way they could avoid it, with the brush and twigs and stones that lay underfoot. Nor did they make any effort to subdue their voices. Harry could hear them very distinctly now. After the passage of a few minutes, the men were almost on top of him.

Harry had only to raise his eyes, and push aside a couple of drooping leaves, in order to see one of his pursuers, his chest and waist covered in the drab khaki Turner favored as the uniform of members of The Saving Remnant.

"Wait, I think, there . . ." Harry heard the man say to his companion whom he had yet to spot.

A succession of rounds blasted the foliage encircling him. Harry dropped closer to the ground, but managed to get off a shot. Aiming at the patch of khaki that was visible to him, it immediately turned a muddy crimson. There was a sustained yell, then the man vanished from sight.

A further barrage from the man's companion followed, and again they tore up a great deal of the vegetation and bits and pieces of a tree trunk, but they failed to find Harry who kept plunging deeper into the brush. He could not see his attacker to return the fire and so he desisted, hunkering down behind a rock formation sparkling with crystals.

The three men who'd gone looking for him elsewhere were now

stumbling hurriedly in his direction, alerted by the outbreak of gunfire. “Over here! He’s over here someplacel He’s gotten Hank, he’s gotten Hank bad.”

“Where the fuck is he?” one of the newcomers asked impatiently.

“Over there somewhere, I told you. Would you look at Hank, please. He’s in bad shape.”

There was an interval of silence during which Harry guessed Hank’s condition was being examined.

Then he heard an angry shout. “What are you talking about, you shithead? Hank’s in bad shape? Hank’s not in bad shape. Hank’s fucking dead.”

“Dead?”

“Dead, what did you think he was, sleeping? Where is this fucker?”

Harry had an urge to move forward, because he still could only hear them, and he wanted a view as well. But it was an urge he suppressed, moving would only disclose his position.

In any case, soon enough they were mobilized sufficiently to resume their search for him. But they were a lot more cautious now, keeping low, spreading out so that no one was too close to his companion.

Of the four, one was emboldened to advance faster than the others. Maybe he was under the impression he’d be awarded with a medal of some kind if he personally vanquished Harry.

Harry let him get close. He was hopeful he could lure his friends within range too. Taking them out one at a time was going to be a tedious, and potentially more dangerous business.

The lead man, however, stopped abruptly as though he sensed he was in jeopardy. He waited until the other three had caught up with him. “What is it?” one of them asked.

The lead man held up his hand, indicating silence. He motioned two men forward and directed them to form a circle. Because he was completely vulnerable from the rear, this was exactly what Harry feared.

He had to stop them, and he did this by the simple expedient of firing in their path.

“Get the fuck back here!” the lead man ordered. “Don’t fire, it’s no use firing, you can’t hit him, get back here!”

But the others weren’t listening. They opened up with a furious assault that accomplished nothing. The rounds continued to be deflected by the rock.

Though it meant briefly exposing his head to view, Harry took aim

and fired back.

One man spun around, clutching his leg, and tumbled into the undergrowth. A second did some kind of a dance and threw down his gun. Harry had to duck down too quickly to be able to puzzle out whether the man was hit or whether he'd suddenly lost his nerve.

There was a great deal of shouting and confusion, but no more firing. Harry risked raising his head again. What he saw surprised him. Two men were lying prostrate, moaning with pain, while the other two were tearing back through the woods, either to obtain help, or else just to get to somewhere safe.

Seeing his opportunity, Harry broke cover and headed across the practice range, zigzagging as he did so simply as a precaution, but he drew no fire.

The door to the shelter was bolted and even a .44 was not about to force it open. After all, it had been designed to resist an atomic blast. But Harry was not discouraged. He had a feeling that very shortly he would gain entrance to the shelter without having to storm in.

He chose to conceal himself behind a corrugated shed in which were stored tools and farming implements.

Within a couple of minutes, the same two men he'd seen fleeing the woods reappeared, their faces soaked in perspiration. One of them stepped up to the door of the shelter—a door whose location one had to be sure of as it was camouflaged with grass and sod—and pressed a bell of some kind that Harry had failed to notice. The bell activated an intercom system. While it looked as though the man was speaking to the ground, Harry guessed there was someone responding to him from inside.

Then, electronically, the door slid open. The two men entered. Harry waited a moment then followed right behind them.

They didn't realize he was there at first—not until the second man looked back to see if the door was closing.

"Don't say a word and get your hands up," Harry instructed the pair.

Because Harry occupied the top stair, he clearly held the most advantageous position. The two men understood their dilemma and complied with his directive.

Harry didn't count on the sudden appearance of another man, carrying an Ingram M10 in his hands. The M10 Harry knew was one of those scaled-down submachine guns capable of firing 1200 rounds per minute. Which was more than sufficient to eliminate the threat he posed to the security of the shelter.

At first, the newcomer failed to notice Harry. His eyes were directed elsewhere. “Doc Pine’s coming along in a minute,” he said. It was only then he gazed up and discovered what had happened.

His immediate reaction was to raise his gun. He didn’t shoot it—his own men were in the way—but he wanted to make clear he meant business. “Stop right there,” he commanded. “You all stop right there.”

CHAPTER

Thirteen

The two hostages on the stairs were obviously confused. Harry urged them forward, while their colleague urged them not to move.

For a couple of seconds, it was a standoff. Then one of the men in front of Harry bounded down to the bottom of the stairs, possibly in expectation his friend might follow, leaving Harry exposed to the murderous fire of the M10.

But instead his friend spun around, drawing his gun from his belt simultaneously, in an effort to divert Harry's attention from the man brandishing the submachine gun.

Harry, however, understood where the greater danger to him lay and leapt to the side just as the man with the M10 opened fire. But where Harry was before he wasn't now, and consequently, he managed to avoid injury. The steel door above rang noisily with the impact of the rounds hurtling into it.

With one of his comrades trapped on the stairs, Harry's assailant couldn't adjust his aim without risking the death of the wrong man.

Taking advantage of that fact, Harry threw himself down firing two shots, both of which caught the man at the bottom of the stairs in his gut. His face bore a look of unmistakeable surprise and sudden shock. Somehow, even as he was thrown back against the further wall, he managed to maintain hold of the M10 which he discharged at a furious rate before he died.

But his aim was way off, which was understandable as his main concern at the moment was getting the business of dying done. Rather than hitting Harry, he cut his friend down, savaging him with a hail of bullets that blew out his vitals, strewing them all over the stairway.

The blood and viscera made the going slippery, but at least Harry encountered no further opposition. Nonetheless, he proceeded with caution, having no idea what had happened to the third member of the party who'd escaped the fate of his two associates. There was no doubt in his mind that there must be others about in this immense subterranean structure. Surely that quack, Dr. Pine, could be expected to turn up, though Harry did not anticipate much of a problem from him.

He prowled the rooms, keeping close to the walls and using the shadows to obscure his presence whenever possible. Muffling his own footsteps, he listened attentively for any sound that might give away the presence of the opposition. But the only sound he was conscious of was the sound of his own rapid breathing.

No one seemed to be around. Had everyone fled as soon as they'd heard the exchange of gunfire by the entrance?

Then he stopped. He was sure he'd heard something. He was standing by a room so jammed full of chests and cabinets and old grandfather clocks it was almost impossible to get a sense of the dimensions of this room. Then he heard a hacking cough.

He sprang forward, hoping for the element of surprise, the .44 cocked and leveled in his hands, ready to blow away anyone who posed resistance.

When he raised his eyes, he found himself looking into the deadest pair of eyes he'd ever beheld on the face of someone still among the living.

Someone coughed again. Harry turned to see Dr. Pine. He was seated by a canopied bed and on the bed lay Grant Turner.

"Say hello to Mr. Turner," Dr. Pine said matter-of-factly. "Mr. Turner is unable to say hello back, I am afraid. Actually, Mr. Turner is unable to say much of anything at all."

Harry stepped closer to the bed. Turner's eyes fixed him with a blank but unrelenting stare.

"What happened to him?"

Pine indicated a small scar near the corner of his eye. "Someone with a grudge against the founder of The Saving Remnant apparently stuck a very sharp object into his brain. It didn't kill him, but it seems to have succeeded in making Mr. Turner a vegetable. He has lost much of his motor function along with his speech. It is impossible to tell whether he is aware of his surroundings or not. I fear he'll have to be consigned into an institution soon because I am not of the age where I can care for him with the proper attention he needs. But for now, I decided to leave him be. He so loves these antiques of his. And if there is a sudden attack by the Russians, you see, he'll be safe here."

Harry averted his eyes from the hard dead stare of the brain-damaged Turner. He observed that Pine, in his own peculiar way, had withdrawn from reality. He had not so much as remarked upon the gunshots he must have heard earlier. It probably made no difference to him what happened now that his leader was incapacitated.

"Who did this, do you know?"

Pine shrugged. “There were no witnesses, but my guess is that it was one of Mr. Turner’s foremost disciples.”

“And who might that be?”

“Mr. James William Gallant. Mr. Turner always called him Jimmy. Never call somebody Jimmy if they are likely to think you’re patronizing them.”

“Gallant,” Harry muttered under his breath. Always goddamn Gallant, one step ahead of him. “Where is he now?”

“Quite frankly, I don’t know. If he could speak perhaps he’d tell you,” Pine said, gesturing to the silent figure in the bed. “But since that is clearly impossible, I’m afraid I can’t help you.” He coughed again, then apologized. “I have a frightful cold.” To dramatize this, he blew long and hard into a dirty handkerchief. “I suspect Mr. Gallant has established himself in compatible surroundings. He looks a great deal different from when you last laid eyes on him.”

“How different?”

“Very. I did some cosmetic surgery on him that however minor has dramatically altered his appearance. Come over here and I’ll show you.”

He guided Harry over to a Charles Rennie Mackintosh tea table and proceeded to open an oversized manila pad. “Have you a pen? I will make a sketch.”

Harry lent him his pen. The doctor held it over the paper for an instant as though he were trying to recall exactly what changes he’d effected on Gallant.

It was at that point Harry became aware that somebody had just come into the room. He glanced behind him just as the last soldier of The Saving Remnant fired at him with a .38. The bullet grazed Harry’s shoulder, searing him and loosening a trickle of blood down his right arm.

Harry still had the .44 in his grip. He dropped to the floor and fired back. There was a furious exchange. The man with the .38 was firing not at Harry directly but rather was trying to pin him down while he sought cover.

But the hapless Dr. Pine didn’t react fast enough. Harry took hold of his arm to pull him down. But as Pine responded, he was struck three times in succession by the .38. Two of the rounds were hardly critical, but the third entered his right eye and lodged in his brain. The doctor remained upright, but blood was running out of his nostrils and when he opened his mouth, as though he had something more he wished to say, blood poured out. Almost as an afterthought, he collapsed to the

floor and with a strangled gasp, gave up the struggle to hold onto his life.

All this while Harry continued to return the fire. He ceased the moment he lost sight of his assailant. Presumably, he'd found cover behind one of the chests. Harry waited, prepared for a further onslaught. Nothing happened. He listened, but heard nothing.

Finally, his impatience got the best of him, and throwing caution to the wind, he rushed down to the other end of the room.

Still nothing. Presently, he discovered the reason. Although he hadn't realized it at the time, he'd managed to hit the man and like a wounded cat, he was looking for cover.

The man was in the process of dying. Thrashing in a deepening pool of his own blood, there was nothing to be done for him. The man died.

Harry returned to have a last look at the doctor. There was on his face an expression of strange amusement as if it were no great catastrophe to depart the world so messily, without a chance to compose oneself and put the final touches on one's life. The blank piece of paper on which he'd intended to render the face of the altered James Gallant reproached Harry with its emptiness.

Now he was alone. Or almost alone, because Turner was still in the bed. There was no telling whether he was aware of the gun battle that had occurred all around him or whether being aware of it, it mattered much to him.

Somewhere, Harry guessed there would have to be a record of where Gallant had gone. There had to be at least some shred of evidence to explain the connection between Turner and Gallant. There must be a reason why Gallant had chosen to break with his benefactor and leave him as a vegetable.

There were papers, an incredible number of them. With Germanic efficiency, Turner had catalogued every object d'art, every painting, every cabinet, every lamp, ashtray, and shard of pottery that had come into his possession over the years. There were papers listing the value of his acquisitions and there were even papers which recorded where they were all acquired. They constituted a self-indictment of massive proportions since they were tantamount to an admission of theft on a grand scale. Obviously, Turner no longer had to worry about facing a court of law. No imprisonment could match the one he suffered from now.

Predictably, there were thousands of old *Saving Remnant* newsletters and a book full of aphorisms and theories that Turner had self-published and called *The Turner Thesis for a New Age.*

Yet nothing he could find among all these documents proved remotely helpful to him. The hours passed as he continued to pore over the records and his concentration began wavering. To have come so far, to have fought so hard, and to still come up with nothing. The frustration and anger were getting to him.

It was then he came upon a folder containing several 8½ x 11-inch glossies. Each of them depicted a mansion or the grounds of an estate. He surmised these were photographs of the residences which Turner had chosen to plunder. One photograph in particular caught his eye, but he was unable at first to say why. He went through the batch quickly, but he kept coming back to the same one.

Although, he was generally unacquainted with the land holdings of the very rich, he was almost certain he'd been to the place revealed in this photograph. It showed a rambling white house, with two large wings on either end, overlooking a body of water.

Then it came to him. It was Jay Silk's estate. He'd seen it only once, and then at night, when he'd driven Sheila and her daughter there. But the more he gazed at the photograph, the more he was sure he was right.

Promise or no promise, he was going up to Silk's estate that very night.

On his way out he took a last good look at the man in the bed.

"Nice doing business with you, Mr. Turner," he said, knowing the authorities would find him.

And while he didn't glance back, he had every reason to believe those dead eyes were following him out of the room.

CHAPTER

Fourteen

Each room of the Silk mansion could have been installed in a museum and protected from the soiled hands of the public by satin ropes drawn across the doorways. The study, for instance, contained several Italian and French bronzes dating back to the Renaissance. One outstanding piece stood on the white travertine coffee table and it, alone, was probably worth close to a quarter of a million dollars. Even with all the knowledge Gallant had amassed in his time with Turner, he could not begin to estimate the worth of the 17th Century tapestries draping from the walls.

Since it was no longer a matter of any relevance to use his knowledge in the expectation of pulling a grand heist some night, he decided to make it work for him in another way.

Although he kept his comments to a minimum, and never tried too openly to impress his employer, he let it be known he had more than a passing acquaintance with the artworld. One morning, he casually inquired of Silk where he'd obtained the 19th Century silk panel Russian screen that was employed to partition one of the larger rooms in the right wing of the house.

Silk was astounded. While he pretended not to be, he answered with the same casualness as the question had been put to him. His expression however was one of frank surprise. Where, he must have wondered, did a chauffeur come upon such knowledge?

A few more comments and questions from Gallant, dropped off-handedly, were all that was needed to break down the barrier between the two of them. Within a week's time, Silk was inviting Gallant into his living room—an event unprecedented in the history of the Silk household—and engaging him in conversation about art and life. Silk believed everybody had a philosophy of life, no matter how crudely developed, and he wanted to hear Gallant's.

Modestly, Gallant claimed to have once worked in the M.H. De Young Memorial Museum in Golden Gate Park and that was how he knew so much about painting and sculpture.

"But you study, don't you, young man?" Silk said.

"Some."

“You are not being candid with me, sir. I believe you have studied a great deal. Why have you sought employment at such a low station when you are obviously capable of so much more?”

Gallant explained that to some, money did not come easily.

Silk, to whom money did come easily, was unimpressed with this argument. He intimated that if Gallant—or David Holstrom, as he thought him to be—proved a loyal and trustworthy employee in the role of chauffeur-bodyguard, he might soon be in line for a promotion. “To a job more suited to your talents,” said Silk.

Gallant, naturally, expressed his gratitude. There was no question Silk perceived in his clever and unassuming chauffeur a man he could one day succeed in molding in his own image.

Not unexpectedly, he told Sheila about Gallant. It was almost as if Gallant was his discovery. A director talking about the waitress he’d made into a movie star would have sounded no less excited.

Sheila listened patiently to what her father had to say. Although circumstances obliged them to live in the same house, that house was so big they seldom had to speak to each other if they chose not to. And more often than not, Sheila chose not to. She was polite with her father, even deferential, but uneasy around him. This uneasiness was a legacy from her childhood, and it had only grown more acute with time. While Silk was careful never to mention her unhappy involvements with police officers, the matter was obviously never far from his thoughts. Every conversation they had, no matter how trivial the subject, was fraught with tension.

It was six-year-old Louise that made their living together tolerable. Silk doted on his granddaughter and she, unwittingly, became the mediator, the go-between, bridging some of the unconquerable distance that separated Silk from Sheila.

It had been almost a rule with Sheila that any man her father liked was someone she avoided. It had started way back when she was in high school and just beginning to date, and nothing had really changed in all the years that had passed since then. So when her father began speaking frequently about the virtues and considerable skills of his chauffeur, Sheila was hardly disposed to pay much attention.

On the other hand, her curiosity was provoked in spite of herself. When had her father ever spoken highly of a servant? Never in all her years.

There was something about this man, David Holstrom, that fascinated her although she could not say for certain what it was. They’d rarely exchanged more than a couple of words, mostly having

to with the destination she wished to be conveyed to, or the state of the weather on any given day.

He was handsome enough, surely, and had a disquieting intensity that reminded her a bit of her husband when he was courting her.

One day, she encountered him as he was on his way to the cottage where he lived.

He smiled and said good evening and was about to proceed when she blocked his way.

“My father tells me you know an awful lot about art.”

“Your father exaggerates.”

“My father also says you’re very modest.”

He shrugged. He didn’t seem to know what to say to this.

“Would you mind if I gave you a test? I’m curious to see just how educated you are.”

“I think you’ll only be disappointed,” he said. “I’ll probably fail.”

“But there’s no harm in trying, is there?”

“I guess not.”

To his utter amazement, she took him through the house to her bedroom. It was situated off a hallway on the second story just down from the bedroom where her daughter slept, and across from the bedroom the woman who cared for Louise occupied.

The bedroom was entirely done in pink. Everywhere there were flowers—lilacs, carnations, crysanthemums, azaleas—flowers on the wall, and flowers sprouting from vases placed at intervals around the bed. The bed was a *lit à polonaise.* The bedboard contained a triptych whose colors duplicated the rose-brown hues of the draperies that hung over the bed itself.

Gallant let out a low appreciative whistle.

“Wait,” she said. She slid open a mirrored closet door to reveal shelves of small statues. One of them, a squat and voluptuous nude bronze, she held out in her hand. “Who did this?”

“I’d say it was a Venus by Maillol.”

“You are good.” She put it back and removed a second one, producing a far more abstract piece. “This you’ll never guess.”

“Marino Marini,” he declared authoritatively.

Her mouth fell open. “You’re amazing.”

“I passed the test?”

“You passed all right.”

“What do I get for it?”

Her smile was enigmatic, almost mischievous. “You’ll see. You’re just going to have to be patient. Good night, Mr. Holstrom.”

There was always a point, Gallant believed, when you knew you had the woman or you had lost her. Sometimes that point came and went in a flash, so quickly you didn’t realize it. It was a look in the eyes, a light touch of fingers dancing on the back of your hand, a confidence whispered suddenly into your ear in the middle of a nightclub performance. But once it happened, once you knew, and knew without any doubt, then you had to move. With a woman, timing was perhaps the most important thing. While Gallant recognized this, he feared all those years in prison had eroded his instinct for timing. But now he understood that that hadn’t happened at all. He’d lost nothing of his knack. If anything, those six years behind bars had sharpened him.

And he knew Sheila was ripe. As much as she attempted to maintain the distance an employer’s daughter was expected to show to a servant, the façade was growing thinner day by day.

One afternoon, she told him, “You’re the only person I can speak to freely around here.”

“You must have friends . . .”

“I left them all behind,” she said wistfully.

“That sounds tragic.”

“No. Not tragic, something else, but not tragic.”

He took her hand in his. She looked at him as if to reproach him, but said nothing and didn’t withdraw her hand.

They sat that way for a time, in the garden, saying little, until the light dwindled from the sky. She said, “Maybe I ought to go now and look in on Louise.”

He released her hand. She began walking in the direction of the house. Then she turned and regarded him. He was still sitting on the bench.

“Later tonight, are you doing anything, oh say, around eleven?”

“No, I don’t believe so.”

“Why don’t you come around to my room for a drink?”

“You have more statues you want me to identify?”

She threw her head back laughing. “Maybe,” she said.

It was a long ride, and as fast as he drove, Harry realized he would not reach Paradise Road for another hour. There was no way he could

keep on this way. His head was light. He needed more nourishment and several cups of coffee if he were to keep going. He stopped at a diner along the highway and went inside to order a cheeseburger. He again deliberated, as he had several times since he'd left the headquarters of The Saving Remnant, about phoning Sheila. But what was he going to say? Is anything wrong? Is someone making off with your father's valuables? Is there someone suspicious prowling about the grounds? Is James Gallant there? Not the James Gallant the way you remember, but a man whose face has been changed? She would think him a madman whose perilous and unpredictable lifestyle had turned him paranoid. Each time he considered making the call, he imagined the sound that would come over the wire as she hung up on him.

And so he ate the cheeseburger and had his cups of coffee and never made the call.

She welcomed him in a chemise of olive silk shantung. As he was used to seeing her in jackets and tweed skirts, in crisp white button-down blouses and gabardine slacks, the sight of her in such casual, and seductive, attire caught him by surprise.

As she let him in, Gallant happened to notice hers was not the only door opening up along the hallway corridor. A faint trickle of light was coming from the bedroom belonging to the nursemaid. A woman only in her early fifties, she had the look of an embittered spinster many years older. Gallant imagined she thrived on gossip and prying into other people's affairs.

True to her word, Sheila had a drink set out for him, sparkling champagne. There was a drink for herself as well.

"Are we celebrating anything in particular?"

"Maybe." She wasn't about to clarify this, and Gallant didn't press her. "Why don't you sit down? You make me nervous standing up like that."

Disregarding the other chairs and sofa, he sat on the bed. He decided to stretch out on it. It felt so comfortable and warm it was difficult for him to recall the prison bunk he'd slept on for six long years.

"Aren't you bored here?" she asked him.

"Bored?" It was not a question he'd anticipated. "Not anymore, no, I actually like it here."

Which was, in fact, true. He hadn't thought much about Harry Callahan for several days now. Harry no longer seemed important to

him. He'd gotten mostly everything he'd wanted, especially this woman sitting next to him. He'd severed virtually all his links to his checkered past. If he continued to enjoy Silk's favor, there was no telling how far he could go. He pictured for himself a long prosperous life as master of this vast estate high above Paradise Road.

"Were you ever married?"

"No," he replied. "I somehow never got around to it."

He helped himself to another glass of champagne, and refilled hers simultaneously. As he drank he talked, but was always careful to say very little, always holding himself in check lest he give away too much or let slip some remark that conflicted with what he might have told her or her father before.

But as she was getting drunker—and it was obvious that she was determined to get drunker—her attention began to drift. She was not listening to his words, but rather to the sound of his voice, a voice he owed to Dr. Jonas Pine.

All at once, her face darkened. She regarded him closely. He thought, the game's up. She knows, she must know. He stopped in the middle of a sentence. He wasn't quite sure what he would do if she should now accuse him of murdering her husband.

However, rather than accuse him of anything, she clasped his hand in hers and leaned forward so the only air he had to breathe was filled with the scent of her perfume. "Kiss me," she said. "I want you to kiss me."

He did. He drew her down into the bed, into the wide endless bed, which groaned audibly, its fine old rosewood being unaccustomed to this much weight upon it.

Under the chemise, she wore nothing. As she repositioned her legs, the sudden motion forced the silk material to hike up to her thighs. Gallant burrowed his head into the opening, under cloth and into flesh.

She rocked, and like the bed itself, she groaned, her head tilted back, her eyes shut tight, her hair scattered in disarray about the pillow. All the while, Gallant worked his tongue into her. He couldn't quite believe he had gotten this far. His luck had not run out.

He was getting lost in her, and she in him. Neither of them heard the distant rumble of a car and the decisive slam of a door when it stopped or the sound of footsteps approaching the walkway that led through the garden up to the house.

CHAPTER

Fifteen

"I am sorry, sir, but no one is permitted beyond this point. This is private property."

The security man was dressed in civilian clothes, but the bulge of his gun against his jacket left no doubt of his profession.

Harry displayed his badge though, technically, of course, he had no right to claim he was a police officer on duty.

The security man was unimpressed with his credentials. "Unless you can show me a warrant, Inspector, I am still not obliged to let you on this property. If you are responding to an invitation issued by Mr. Silk, I need only make a phone call to confirm."

But as it was now past midnight, and all but a couple of the windows visible in the house beyond were darkened, it seemed to the security guard there was little likelihood that Harry was here by invitation.

"Why don't you call Mr. Silk, tell him Callahan is here."

Though the security man was dubious, he consented to do this. There was a remote phone situated in a niche carved out of an oak. As the man dialed a series of four digits, he briefly turned away from Harry.

With the side of his hand, Harry struck him in the back of his neck. The blow sucked his consciousness from him and he slumped to the ground.

But he had not taken into account a second man who materialized unexpectedly from the garden. He produced a gun and ran to intercept Harry.

There were few lights in the vicinity, and so Harry was able to work with the darkness, and elude his pursuer, at least until he reached the porch steps on the far right side of the house. It was there the second security man found Harry again.

"Stop there, Mister, I don't want to hurt you," he shouted.

Harry didn't stop. The man fired. The shot went wide, but managed to puncture a window, producing a shriek of glass.

Gallant came fully awake. While Sheila's bedroom was located in

the left wing of the house, the detonation of a gunshot was unmistakable. Sheila, however, seemed not to have heard it. She sighed, half-opened her eyes, shifted position in bed, then fell back asleep.

Gallant drew himself out of bed, and reached for his clothes. Sheila, reawakened, saw what he was doing, and groggily asked him where he was going.

"Don't worry about me," he said. "Go back to sleep. I'll be right back."

The Dan Wesson Turner had given him had been left in his cottage. But he made sure never to step out unarmed. His .44 Magnum rested comfortingly against his chest. That he carried a gun even when he was off-duty went unquestioned in the Silk household. After all, he'd been hired not just as a chauffeur but also as a bodyguard. In Jay Silk's opinion, security was a round-the-clock business.

Hastening down the stairs, he reached the living room only half a minute before Silk himself.

Silk regarded Gallant questioningly. Obviously, he wanted to know what he was doing in his living room in the middle of the night when he should have been asleep in his own bed, but he determined the source of the commotion was of more pressing significance at the moment.

"I heard a gunshot," Gallant said.

"So did I." Silk was in his bathrobe, a small caliber pistol in hand.

At that instant the alarm went off, producing a shrill rhythmic blast. All over the house lights flashed on as the servants, abruptly shaken from their sleep, awoke to see what was responsible for this disturbance.

"It's coming from the right wing of the house," Gallant said, bringing his own gun into view.

The two of them raced through the many halls and rooms that constituted the right wing. Before they got to the new kitchen, which was to be distinguished from the older one in the left wing, Gallant stopped Silk.

"Wait, I think I saw somebody up there. You stay back, I don't want you getting hurt."

It was Gallant's hope he could singlehandedly overcome the intruder and prove to Silk not only was he a shrewd judge of art, but he was a courageous, and highly efficient, bodyguard as well. Who knows, if he succeeded at this his promotion might come about that much sooner.

Silk stayed back although he wasn't happy about it. He too was anxious to be in on the kill.

Gallant advanced forward. The kitchen was in darkness, but he could still make out the broken glass in the door the intruder had broken through.

At that moment, he heard a voice behind him. He whipped around, but too late—the man had somehow managed to slip behind him.

"I'm not here to harm anybody," he said though he kept his gun trained on him. "I'm just here to talk."

With the absence of light, and in view of his position, Gallant was able to get only a partial glimpse of the man addressing him. He didn't need to see him with any greater clarity. The voice served to identify him well enough. It was Harry Callahan.

For several moments, Gallant remained stationary. He didn't drop his gun, he stayed where he was. Did Harry know who he was? If not then he was safe. There was no need to act as anything other than a loyal employee of Jay Silk.

Silk had also heard Harry's voice. He approached him

"Callahan," he said, "what is the meaning of all this? Most of my visitors generally phone ahead. They seldom feel a need to break into my house."

"The situation didn't allow me that luxury," Harry said. "I came to warn you and Sheila."

Silk stepped closer to Harry. Both men seemed to have momentarily forgotten about Gallant.

Even so Gallant was breathing easier. There'd been no sign of recognition on Harry's part although Gallant knew exactly why he was here.

"Warn us?" Silk's voice betrayed his anger and incredulity. "Warn us about what, for God's sake?"

"I believe the man who killed your son-in-law has infiltrated your estate."

"You're mad."

Slowly, Gallant turned so he now faced Silk and Harry. Harry barely glanced at him. Gallant was thoroughly convinced his disguise was effective. He sent a silent prayer of thanks to Jonas Pine, quack that he was. The man could do wonders with cosmetic surgery.

Harry was attempting to explain why he believed James Gallant might well be a member of his staff. Gallant was shaking his head. "I think you have jumped to conclusions that are unwarranted by the

facts. You are making suppositions, Callahan."

The alarm was still going. It was getting on Silk's nerves. He interrupted his discussion and told Gallant to shut it off. "And call the police, tell them it's a mistake. You know the code, don't you?"

Gallant allowed he did and hurried off to obey Silk. He was happy to keep the police out of this affair. It was messy enough already.

When he'd done as Silk had requested, and come back into the kitchen, he still found the two arguing. But they were no longer alone. Sheila, clad in a robe of red terrycloth, had joined them. She seemed utterly confused. Her eyes sought Gallant's as though she expected he would be able to explain everything.

"I have heard you've been in grave difficulty with your own colleagues," Silk said. "Look at you! You look like somebody's just swept you up off the corner of Mission Street. I think you are deranged." All his animosity toward police officers was coming out. "Haven't you done enough to make my daughter's life miserable?"

"Daddy!" Sheila protested. "Don't!"

Silk wouldn't even look at her. As far as he was concerned, this was no longer any of her business.

Harry realized he was making no headway.

Silk was growing impatient, he wanted to be through with this disagreeable encounter. "I will do you a favor, Callahan. If you will go on your way peacefully and promise never to come back here, I will let the matter rest. Otherwise, I will be obliged to notify your superiors and see to it you are placed under arrest."

Harry gave Sheila an imploring look, but she seemed too stunned, too bemused, to intervene on his behalf. Maybe, Gallant thought, she wanted Harry to be on his way, just like Silk did. Just like he did.

It seemed Harry was about to capitulate. He shrugged, and forlornly started toward the door minutes before he'd broken through.

To get to the door, he had to pass by Gallant. The kitchen was too narrow to avoid him. Gallant couldn't restrain a small smile of triumph as Harry came close to him. This was not the kind of revenge he'd imagined, but it was satisfying enough in any case.

Just then Harry looked into his face. He hesitated for a fraction of a second, then continued on a few steps, only to stop again. Gallant observed the path Harry's eyes were taking. He realized Harry was staring at the gun he held. A .44 Magnum just like Harry's.

Harry stared hard at Gallant's face. Their eyes met.

"You!" was all Harry said.

CHAPTER

Sixteen

Just then they were distracted by the sight of six-year-old Louise. Clad in a nightgown, she wandered dazedly into the kitchen, rubbing her eyes. “Mommy, what’s wrong?” she inquired, startled by the sight of three armed men surrounding her mother.

“Get back, sweetheart,” Sheila urged her. “Go back to bed.”

Before anyone could react, the woman responsible for the child’s welfare came into the kitchen. Evidently, she’d been chasing after Louise.

“Miss Travis, please take Louise back to bed.”

Miss Travis, sensing the danger without, however, being exactly sure of its nature, attempted to do just that.

Gallant sprang forward and wrested hold of the little girl, placing the gun to her head. Sheila screamed. Harry automatically turned his own weapon toward Gallant, but quickly realized that there was nothing to be done. He couldn’t fire without jeopardizing Louise’s life. Meanwhile, Silk remained motionless, confused to the point of paralysis. “What is happening here?” he demanded. No one answered him.

Miss Travis was the only one who refused to acknowledge Gallant had the upperhand. Without thinking, she pounded her fists against Gallant’s back, shouting, “Let her go! Let the child go!”

“Miss Travis, no!” Sheila took a step forward as though she meant to restrain the woman, but Harry stopped her.

“Both of you, drop your guns,” Gallant commanded. He was doing his utmost to ignore the feeble blows the spinster was raining down on him.

“We have no choice,” Harry told Silk. “Do as he says.”

“I don’t understand. Who are you?” He was addressing Gallant.

“James Gallant,” Harry said.

Although the man had put a gun to his granddaughter’s head, Silk couldn’t seem quite able to believe this was possible, that he had been taken in by such a grand deception. Harry had the feeling he wouldn’t mind so much if the man identified himself as someone other than

Gallant, no matter how notorious or criminally inclined.

Gallant only confirmed Harry's pronouncement. Silk looked aghast. The gun dropped from his hand.

Miss Travis refused to give up. On the contrary, she was growing more desperate. Paying no heed to Sheila's cries, she reached her hands around and with her sharp nails began clawing Gallant's face. This was something he could no longer ignore. He wheeled about to confront her, spinning the terrified little girl with him, and discharged his gun.

The woman was hurtled back into the other room, an enormous hole in her stomach. A small sound, like a sigh, escaped from her lips, and she promptly died. Blood continued to seep out of her in copious amounts. It was astonishing, a woman so slender and frail could have contained so much blood.

"My God, man!" Silk said incredulously.

Sheila ran to the woman, but nothing could be done for her.

"Look what you did!" she shrieked at Gallant. "You murdered her!"

"She's not the first one," Harry remarked.

"And won't be the last."

"Your quarrel's with me," Harry said, understanding too well Gallant's intention. "Let the others go."

Louise was staring at them with wide, moist eyes. Her small body kept trembling with sobs. But her terror was so pronounced she couldn't cry anymore.

"Don't tell me who my quarrel's with. My quarrel's with the world, my quarrel's with God. Now, all of you, into the other room."

As they prepared to obey his instruction, one of the other servants appeared. He regarded the scene with stupification and fear.

"Silk, tell him if anyone calls the police, I'll kill her, and the rest of you too."

His voice shaking, Silk communicated Gallant's threat to the man.

"I'll let the others know," the servant replied, enormously grateful to be released from this chamber of horrors.

Harry recognized Gallant was facing a grave dilemma. He could not be absolutely certain the servant would keep his word or the police hadn't already been summoned. If he was to have any hope of escape, he would have to act quickly. There was little time to savor his vengeance.

The chairs in which they were told to sit were white and old, dating back to the time of Louis XV. Gallant, still keeping Louise close to

him, turned on the light of an impressive chandelier. He used the dimmer, apparently enjoying the incongruous romantic effect he was creating. Harry gazed into his eyes and saw only madness there. The man might do anything. It was possible the threat of police intervention and the prospect of dying did not matter to him. Reasoning with him was out of the question.

He stood there, at the far end of the room by the fireplace, looking from one of his hostages to the other. Sheila had her head down on the table, quietly weeping.

It was Harry's impression Gallant really had no idea of what to do next. Simply killing them all was not quite diabolical enough.

He might just as well have been reading the murderer's mind.

"Silk!" he said. "Stand up and come over here."

Silk stayed in his chair. It was likely he had not understood this simple directive. He was not used to being thrust into such a humiliating position.

"Stand up, asshole!"

"Dad," Sheila said. It was enough of a jolt to mobilize him.

He lumbered over toward Gallant. "What are you going to do to me?"

"Where's all your power now?" Gallant taunted him. "What good's all your millions doing you, answer me, asshole?"

Silk had no answer for him.

"You know," Gallant said, his voice strangely detached as though he wasn't understanding the words issuing from his mouth, "you know, I'm told the IRA and the Red Brigades boast they're able to kneecap people so precisely they can tell in advance whether you'll be in the hospital one month or three months or six months. I read about that in prison. You learn a lot of interesting things in prison, am I right, Harry?"

"That's right, Gallant." Harry decided that there was no alternative but to try and humor the man.

Gallant lowered the .44 so it was trained on the back of Silk's right knee.

Harry rose from the table, but Gallant quickly sighted the gun on Louise, forcing him to sit back down again.

"Now I want to ask you a question, Mr. Millionaire. Would you do anything for your granddaughter?"

Silk hesitated a moment. At last, he said, "Yes, yes, I would."

"Would you give up the use of your legs for her?"

“For God’s sake, will you listen to me? I can make it worth your while if you will only go and leave us in peace.”

“Your problem, Silk, is you can’t deal with people on any level that doesn’t involve money. I don’t want your money, I just want your answer. Think of me as a kind of sociologist. I like to see how far people will go is all.”

“Yes, I told you, go ahead.”

“I am glad to have your permission.”

For an instant, he didn’t do anything, leading both Harry and Sheila to think he might not carry out his threat.

Silk was trembling so badly he could barely remain upright.

Gallant lowered the gun and fired twice. Silk flew into the air, blood spurting from both his knees. Howling in agony, he collapsed in a heap. Immediately, he began vomiting over the Persian rug, already saturated with his blood.

A scream was torn from Louise’s lungs. It was a furious, uncomprehending cry of protest.

Suddenly, Sheila reached out, taking hold of one of the Italian bronzes, and hurdled it at Gallant. “No!” she shouted. “No more, goddamnit!”

The bronze glanced off Gallant’s shoulder, but the blow was painful enough for him to stagger back, momentarily surrendering his grip on Louise.

Harry leapt out of the chair and grabbed the girl, pulling her down as Gallant fired at them. The bullet passed right overhead, penetrating one of the 19th Century Russian silk screens that Gallant had once praised to Silk with such admiration.

Sheila threw herself on top of her child. But Gallant held his fire. “Get the fuck up, all of you, up.”

By now Silk had lost consciousness and lay where he’d fallen, the blood trailing from his legs in twin streams.

Instead of returning to her chair, Sheila turned her attention to her father. “I can’t let him bleed to death,” she declared, and without seeking permission, strode over to the draperies and ripped a portion of them from the wall.

“What do you think you’re doing, bitch?”

“I’m trying to stop the bleeding.”

Gallant seemed more amused than angry at this. “He’s going to die anyway, it’s a waste.” He regarded Harry who was holding tightly onto Louise. “An hour ago, the bitch was fucking me. If you hadn’t

come along, we'd still be in bed together."

Harry thought this was an obvious ploy on Gallant's part to provoke him, but when he looked at Sheila, he realized the man wasn't lying. He realized also this was what Gallant had wanted from the start, having gotten his full measure of revenge, he was really sated. Killing them would be almost an afterthought, an epilogue to a story which had already reached its conclusion.

There was bile in his throat. Whatever Sheila's motivation had been when she'd gone to bed with him, however ingenious his deception, such things didn't matter to him very much. But the act itself was all that was important. Just the act itself.

Sheila knelt down by her father's side and began to knit the bandages she'd improvised from the torn draperies around her father's legs. As far as Harry could see, they weren't doing much good. The wounds were too serious and the blood flow too heavy.

Gallant was facing away from Sheila, the .44 directed at Harry and the child. While Harry kept his gaze fixed on Gallant, he could still see Sheila out of the corner of his eye. He saw she was no longer tending to her father, but was rather running her hands along the edge of the material she'd pulled from the wall.

At first, Harry could not figure out what in the world she was doing. But then he saw something glimmer in the low light from the chandelier. It was one of the hooks used to hold the drapes in place.

Quietly, she drew herself up and approached Gallant. Barefooted, she scarcely produced a sound. Nonetheless, Harry started talking to Gallant, hoping to distract him.

"Has it all been worth it?" he asked.

"Worth it? Sure it has. But I am not interested in philosophizing. I want to ask you a question."

"Like the question you asked Silk?"

"That's right. My question is do you want to die first or do you want to see the little girl's head blown clear off her body?"

Sheila was a couple of steps away. She had to move very slowly. Now she raised her arm. The hook flashed as she plunged it into Gallant's neck as hard as she could.

With one hand, Harry pushed over the coffee table, gathering Louise in his arms and dragging her down with him. The table would provide an uncertain and temporary shelter, but it was all that was available at the moment.

Gallant let out a wrenching scream and lurched backwards. With his free hand, he attempted to pry the hook out of his neck while at the

same time firing his gun.

The table protecting Harry and Louise splintered in all directions, but neither one was hurt.

“You bitch!” Gallant cried, now concentrating his entire attention on his assailant, and while Sheila had run to the other end of the room, she was completely exposed.

Gallant managed finally to pluck the hook from out of his flesh, releasing a torrent of blood in the process. He stared at the hook with disdain and then brought up his gun, sighting it on Sheila.

Harry rushed into him, knocking him to the floor just as the gun went off.

The mirror four feet from where Sheila was standing seemed to vanish with a clattering din.

As Gallant struggled against Harry, Harry took one finger and with as much strength as he could summon, dug it into the wound that the hook had just produced. The pain must have been terrible for it caused Gallant to thrash about wildly.

But Gallant was strong and vicious. By sheer willpower, he was able to force Harry off him. Still with the gun gripped in his hand, he turned it in Harry’s direction, muttering, “This is it, you shit . . .”

Sheila raised the same Italian bronze piece she’d used earlier and smashed it down on his head.

Blood coursed out of his scalp, leaking onto his face. He fired. The shot went awry. But Gallant refused to give up. How he was able to maintain consciousness was beyond Harry.

Sheila was shocked by what she’d done and could do no more. She ran to her daughter.

Gallant’s movements were terribly slow and clumsy. He could barely see. He was trying his best to get Harry in focus.

Harry approached him. Seizing his gunhand, he twisted it hard so the .44 was no longer facing him, but was now pressing into Gallant’s stomach. Harry squeezed his finger against Gallant’s until the trigger was depressed entirely.

The blast was partially muffled. The trajectory of the bullet took it up into his stomach, higher into his lungs. Opening his mouth, blood erupted. He pitched back onto the rug, away from Harry, the gun still in his grasp. Miraculously, he did not die, but managed to pull himself upright and aim the gun once more at Harry.

There was no way Harry could escape.

“You lose, sucker,” Gallant mumbled, the blood cresting over his

chin.

He pulled the trigger. The gun clicked.

“No, you’re wrong, Gallant. You’re the one who loses.”

Gallant’s whole body shuddered, as he dropped back and moved no more.

Once he’d assured himself Sheila and Louise were all right, Harry put a call into his department. An ambulance would be needed for Silk certainly, and it was likely that the others might have to be treated for shock.

To his astonishment, he got Bressler on the phone. It was very late and there was no reason for Bressler to be on duty.

Bressler listened impatiently to what Harry had to say.

“We’ll have people there shortly, but I want you down here right now.”

“Why, for Chrissakes?”

“Because some son of a bitch has just hijacked an Amtrak train headed here from L.A.”

“An Amtrak train?” This was beyond belief.

“That’s right. I need somebody who can handle it. You’re it.”

“I’m on suspension, remember.”

“Not anymore. You’re back,” Bressler said and hung up.

Back to what? Harry wondered and went into the kitchen to get his gun.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DANE HARTMAN was a Warner Books imprint pseudonym used by two American novelists, Ric Meyers and Leslie Alan Horvitz. "Hartman" was credited as the author of the Dirty Harry action series based on the “Dirty” Harry Callahan character of the popular 1970’s and 1980’s films starring Clint Eastwood.

Following the release of the third Dirty Harry movie, The Enforcer, in 1976, Clint Eastwood made it clear that he did not intend to make any more Dirty Harry movies. In 1981, Warner Books (the publishing arm of Warner Bros., which made the films) began publishing a number of men’s adventure series under its now-defunct "Men of Action" line. One such series features the further adventures of Inspector Harry Callahan. The series was brought to an end when Eastwood decided to direct, produce, and star in a fourth Dirty Harry movie, Sudden Impact, which was released in December 1983.